

JANUARY 2014



Scotland County, NC

A newsletter for the Scotland County community

DSS Children Services unit thanked for foster care results

"The work you have done in just three years has been amazing," said DSS Director Robby Hall to staff associated with Children Services.

Hall praised Children Services staff at a brunch in their honor to recognize them for the efficiencies they created in the foster care program.

Hall added that he is particularly grateful to Children Services staff in light of developments in child welfare at the State level, which this year reduced its funding of the program from 12 percent down to five percent.

Child welfare funding was reduced about 28 percent at the federal level. Last year \$21 million was lost for treatment services throughout the State. The Governor's budget reinstated \$9 million, but it went to 23 counties. Scotland County was not among the 23 counties because of the formula in which distribution was based.

"Replacement money had to come from somewhere, so counties moved from 12 percent funding to 30 percent funding for child welfare," Hall said.

Hall said that's why the efficiencies developed in the last three years in the Children Services unit is all the more praiseworthy because it reduced the number of children in foster care and improved [see DSS page 4](#)

Parks and Recreation, library co-sponsor free tax service

Tax-Aide will provide free income tax preparation services from February 6 to April 11 at Scotland County Memorial Library. Co-sponsored by Parks and Recreation and the library, Tax-Aide is an AARP Foundation program that helps low- to moderate-income taxpayers retain more discretionary income for everyday essentials, such as food and housing, by assisting with tax services and ensuring they receive applicable tax credits and deductions.

Tax-Aide volunteers, who are trained and certified by the Internal Revenue Service, will offer help with personal income tax returns while they maintain strict client confidentiality.

"Last year more than 350 State and federal returns were processed by Tax-Aide volunteers," said Library Director Leon Gyles. "When utilizing the service, the taxpayer should bring Social Security cards for themselves and for their dependents, if applicable, their checkbook or a copy of a canceled check (not a deposit ticket) if they want direct deposit, a copy of last year's return and all important tax information they received, such as W-2s, interest, dividends, retirement income and Social Security statements."

Those who would like more information about the Tax-Aide service or would like to schedule an appointment are asked to contact Parks and Recreation at 277-2585.

Ease of use an asset in new microfilm reader, viewer

A ScanPro 2000 universal microfilm scanner and microfilm viewer replaced a microfilm reader/printer at the library.

The new ScanPro was purchased after the microfilm reader/printer malfunctioned for the very last time in November.

Since it was determined the machine was no longer repairable, library staff explored numerous options for providing the community with the ability to view and print both microfilm and microfiche.

"This is very important since anyone studying Scotland County history or genealogy needs to be able to view *The Laurinburg Exchange*

archives from 1902 to 2013, available only on microfilm," explained Library Director Leon Gyles.

After researching a number of options, the library purchased the ScanPro 2000 based on its ease-of-use and compact size, which made the microfilm reader ideal for patron use.

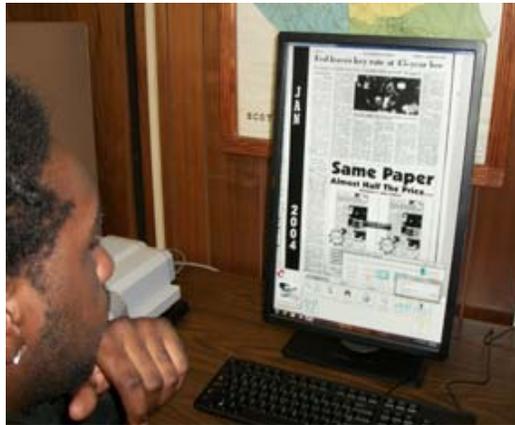
The ScanPro 2000 features high-resolution optics and fast, digital microfilm scanning. Its software includes a touch screen function and WORD-Search technology that makes it possible for users to quickly locate information on any microfilm or microfiche.

The ScanPro 2000 first scans the microfilm image viewed on the screen, then analyzes the scan for word matches. "The user enters the key words for the microfilm image of interest and clicks the WORD-Search button," Gyles said. "The software then highlights any matches for the specified words, similar to the way the Microsoft Word 'find' function does for Word documents."

Gyles added, "The final result is the complete microfilm image on the viewing screen displaying the word matches. Library customers can now easily search and locate birth, obituary and marriage records stored on microfilm."

The ScanPro 2000 microfilm scanner device uses a single, high resolution optical lens that covers all magnifications from 7X to 105X. Therefore, users do not need to go through the hassle of pausing look-ups to change the lens. The high resolution lens makes it possible to view a clear, crisp image on the 24-inch monitor.

Patrons now have the option of either printing the material or saving information on a memory device.



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Post Scripts

Welcome to those employees hired since November 16: **Felicia Faison** and **Maria Roberts**, Health; **Melanie Lavinier**, Sheriff; **Dustin Morrison**, part-time, Sheriff; and **Chassidy Laws**, part-time, Cooperative Extension. Ashton Rivers, sister of **Carlotta Rivers**, Health, graduated from South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, SC, in December with a Bachelor's of Science in computer programming. She plans to attend Clemson University in the fall to pursue her Master's Degree.

Our condolences to ...

Susan Butler, Administration, on the December 31 passing of her father, James Alford, **Latisha Manning**, DSS, on the January 10 passing of her grandmother, Hazel Baker.

the Birthday list for February

2 Carrie Rorie (DSS); **3** Lisa Tew (Health); **5** Steven Dover (Sheriff); **6** Debra Holcomb (Register of Deeds); **8** Al Blades (Parks and Recreation) and Sherika Elliott (DSS); **9** John Cooley (Commissioner); **12** Matthew Locklear (EMS) and Lee Davis (Sheriff); **13** Donald Locklear (EMS) and April Martin (DSS); **16** Patricia Brown (Register of Deeds); **19** Angela Galloway (Cooperative Extension); **20** Teresa Jacobs (DSS) and Mike Edge (EMS); **23** Donald Flowers (Sheriff); **24** Ann Kurtzman (Administration); **25** Frances Moody (Health); **26** Tonya Gay (Sheriff); **27** Ellen Locklear (Health).

A word about W-2s

W-2s were distributed the week of January 20 with all distribution completed by January 31. Part-timers, board members and terminated employees received W-2s in the mail. If a W-2 is lost and a replacement is needed, there will be a \$10 replacement fee.

Pedestrian survey available on-line

County employees who live in the City of Laurinburg are invited to complete a survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Laurinburg> that would help make Laurinburg pedestrian-friendly. The City hopes to develop a plan that would improve citizen access to pedestrian facilities. A steering committee of Laurinburg citizens will establish a community vision for the plan and identify possible funding sources to help all citizens Walk Laurinburg. Go to <http://walklaurinburg.org/> to learn more about the project.

Library reading program allows kids to dream big and earn circus tickets

Kids will have the chance to read some cool library books and earn circus tickets at the same time.

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey and a number of North Carolina libraries, including Scotland County memorial Library, will host some serious fun with Reading with Ringling Bros.!

The reading program is easy and fun for kids to participate in. The best part is that kids can earn a Ringling Bros. circus ticket by simply doing their library reading.

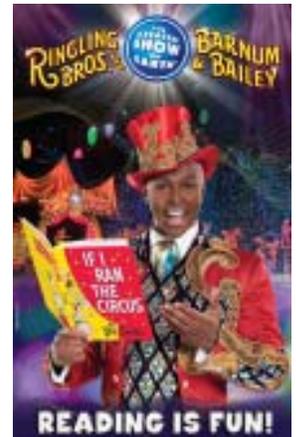
Children from ages two to 12 are invited to enroll with the librarian, who will give kids everything to start their library reading.

This unique library reading program will encourage children not only to read, but also to discover, dream and learn. Visit www.ReadingWithRingling.com for all you want to know about the program.

Want to learn what it takes to soar on the flying trapeze or just what goes into those cream pies that the clowns throw? Or maybe learn some fun facts about one of the more than 100 cities the mile-long circus train visits or how to teach your old dog a new trick? It's easy!

Just visit your local library and enjoy the magic of reading. Children's Librarian Denise Dunn said, "I have been working on enhancing the library's collection of circus books and would like to encourage all children from ages two to 12 to visit the library and check out the reading materials."

Anyone who wants information on this or any other library programs may call library staff at 276-0563 or check out the library website at www.scotlandcounty.org.



News of Note

Soft court resurfacing scheduled for March

The Scotland County Tennis Association (SCTA) has contracted with Court One, Inc. to resurface the soft courts at the Tennis Center in March. The SCTA will contribute \$15,000 toward the project, but needs to raise another \$12,000 to fully fund the resurfacing. The SCTA needs help from all tennis players (current and former), tennis supporters and organizations/businesses interested in improving recreational facilities in the County. Any and all donations would be much appreciated. A donation of \$300 or more will include a one-year soft court membership. Contact the Tennis Center (277-2592) to pledge a donation or mail a donation to: SCTA, P.O. Box 1893, Laurinburg, 28353.

WOW! workouts begin February 3

Join Workouts for Women (WOW!) at Scotland Place 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Workout schedule begins February 3 and continues through March 12. Exercise begins at 5:15 p.m. County employees can take advantage of a reduced cost of \$10 for a six-week session. Regular cost is \$12. Volunteer facilitators lead the workouts. WOW! is sponsored by Healthy Carolinians, the Department of Public Health and Parks and Recreation.

Library Christmas event a thrill

Christmas in the Library December 18 attracted more than 800 people. The event, which ran from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., featured photos with Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus and performances by Scotland Singers and Laurinburg Presbyterian Church Youth Group.



State mortgage program helps people stay in their homes

Homeowners struggling to make mortgage payments due to job loss or reduction of income through no fault of their own or because of an unforeseen temporary financial hardship, such as a divorce, serious illness or death of a co-signer, might find assistance through the NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund. The Fund also assists veterans seeking work or in long-term job retraining after being honorably discharged.

The Mortgage Payment Program offers zero-interest loans of up to \$36,000 to pay mortgage and other related expenses for up to 36 months. The loan can also be used to bring mortgage payments current. The Fund can pay mortgage in the short term (during a job search) or long term (during job retraining); reinstate your mortgage by bringing your payments current; or refinance an unaffordable second mortgage for applicants who qualify.

The frequently asked questions below might help determine who would qualify for the Fund.

Do I have to be delinquent on my mortgage in order to participate?

No. It is best to apply as soon as you know you have a problem. You can be behind or at risk of getting behind on your mortgage payments, or your property can already be in foreclosure.

If I am eligible for one of the programs, does that mean I will automatically get help?

No, you must apply and qualify for any of the loans available through the NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund.

What funds are available to help me?

A maximum of \$36,000 for up to 36 months for the Mortgage Payment Program or up to \$30,000 in a one-time payment for the Second Mortgage Refinance Program. Assistance is provided on a first-come, first-served basis as long as funds are available.

How can I get foreclosure help through the NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund?

Robeson County CDC (910-775-9550) serves Scotland County. Or go to www.NCForeclosurePrevention.gov.

Can I qualify for more than one program?

Not at the same time. Most homeowners will not qualify for more than one form of assistance. However, homeowners who have participated in the Mortgage Payment Program and are now re-employed may be eligible for the Second Mortgage Refinance Program if they still have a demonstrated financial need.

What is "temporary financial hardship?"

Temporary financial hardships include illness, divorce,

separation or death of a co-borrower, and applies to homeowners who are seeking new employment in order to resume future mortgage payments on their own.

Can I get help if I am self-employed and have little or no income coming in?

Yes. Talk to the housing counselor for specific information at 910-775-9550.

I am now re-employed after a job loss but making less than I did before. Can the NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund help me?

The Fund offers a Second Mortgage Refinance Program that helps currently employed North Carolina homeowners

with second mortgages who, through no fault of their own, are financially unable to make their mortgage payment because of a prior job loss, reduced income, or other program-eligible temporary financial hardship.

If I qualify, how quickly can I receive my new loan to help pay my mortgage?

The amount of time varies. Being prepared with your documentation is the best way to keep the process moving quickly.

If I qualify and receive a loan to help prevent foreclosure on my home, how are the funds paid?

The NC Housing Finance Agency will pay mortgage-related expenses directly to the mortgage servicer that collects the monthly payment. If you do not pay escrow to your servicer, the Agency will pay your related expenses directly to your insurance company, taxing authority or homeowner's association.

What are the loan terms for the Mortgage Payment Program?

Loans are made at zero interest and will be forgiven at 20 percent per year for every year the homeowner stays in the home after five years. After 10 years, the owner pays nothing. The loans must be paid back if the home is sold or refinanced, or the homeowner moves out.

What is the maximum amount I can owe on my loan and still be eligible for help?

Total unpaid principal (the amount you owe excluding interest) on your existing primary and second mortgages cannot exceed \$300,000.

What types of homes are eligible?

Single-family homes, townhomes or condominiums (attached or detached), including manufactured homes on foundations permanently affixed to land owned by the homeowner.



DSS mural depicts healing heart

A mural depicting a healing heart cradled in hands and surrounded at the wrists by families will be a centerpiece of the waiting room at DSS. The artist, 18-year-old Tony Steele, pictured right, is a former foster child.

Steele, who was in foster care at the time, participated in an art contest where youth in DSS care were asked to depict their experience in foster care. Steele's mural depicts the broken heart when children are separated from families and the healing that occurs through DSS support and services.

Over the next several weeks foster children will complete the mural. During the unveiling of the design, Steele started the process by painting the outline of the heart.



Gyles makes progress on cemetery book

Library Director Leon Gyles is more than 62 percent of his way through referencing cemeteries in Scotland County. He's documented 111 of the 179 he knows about.

Gyles gave an update to members of the Genealogical Society while at the same time asking for their assistance and referrals to any cemeteries he might have missed.

For Gyles, the cemetery project, which began earlier this year, remains a work in progress. Gyles credits his son, Chase, with getting him started on the quest. At the time, Chase sought his dad's assistance in documenting the location of cemeteries in Scotland County — black, white, Indian and unknown — as a Boy Scout project.

Gyles and his son started with a composite of materials that included references on Cemeteries in Scotland County, Black Cemeteries in Scotland County and the Index of Obituaries from 1888 to 2007, the latter compiled by local genealogists Joyce Braswell and Barbara Edens.

The reference material Gyles has built is extensive and covers more than 300 pages to date.

Gyles notes the street address, takes photos of the approach to the cemeteries, some of which are in the woods, on private property and even on a railroad right of way.

Indeed, Gyles located cemeteries in some unlikely locations, on the property of WestPoint Stevens and at Laurinburg-Maxton Airport, for instance.

He also photographs some of the headstones, especially if the family or cemetery name is not known. Gyles notes longitude, latitude and parcel ID.

With that information in hand, the City indicated it would be able to create a cemetery overlay on its GIS.

Gyles said the information will be of practical use for anyone searching for a family member or loved one buried here.

The first time the project received wide publicity, Gyles received a call from a CEO in Dallas, Texas, who asked for the location of one of Willoughby Pate's sons, who died in 1866. That grave and cemetery is now documented.

On another occasion, Gyles had to get permission from an owner who lives in China to document a cemetery on private property.

Another cemetery, the Smiling Cemetery, is situated on the right of way on Pea Bridge Road at the North Carolina and South Carolina border.

Even as Gyles attempts to complete the cemetery directory, he continues to receive information and tips on cemeteries and burial places he has yet to discover.

Students grow shiitake mushrooms

Teaching children the importance of eating and growing healthy food through various agricultural methods gives them unique experiences, a sense of ownership and helps them connect with their food.

Cooperative Extension provided that experience through a program where Wagram Primary students grew shiitake mushrooms.

NC A&T specialists provided their expertise, the shiitake spawn (seed-like roots) and the tools necessary to inoculate the sweet gum logs donated by a local business enterprise. Students planted the spawn-seed by drilling them into the logs and sealing them with wax. It took five months for the mushrooms to emerge.

With the logs producing a steady supply of mushrooms, they were harvested by the students and donated to The Bagpiper Restaurant at Scotland High School.

DSS unit recognized

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timely permanent placement (12 months) for children in foster care.

Program Administrator April Snead said in 2011 there were 75 foster kids. The number gradually decreased until in 2013 there were 33 foster children.

Placement was achieved through reunification with the parent(s), absent parents taking custody of their child(ren) and adoption. There were children who turned 18 and aged out of foster care and those who ended their CARS agreement.

"We're performing at 82 percent proficiency in getting children out of care in one year or less," said Snead.

That's a four percent increase from 18 months prior to that and a 30 percent increase from three years ago. "We're really working on that standard, and we're doing something right through concurrent planning," Snead said.

Additionally, foster care in 2011 received a budget of \$728,000. "We were able to budget less every year after that knowing that our numbers were going down," Snead said.

Snead projected the program will save almost \$200,000 in actual cost of care expenditures this year, which means the agency could budget even less next year.

"Think about what we did for those families, for those children and the County," Hall added. "Foster care, investigative and treatment staff have done a major thing for the County to protect children and find homes and permanency."

Chairman Guy McCook, who also is DSS Board Chairman, said, "Think about the people who benefit from the services you provide and how it improves their lives."

McCook added, "In three short years, with a lot of planning, determination and good people like yourselves, it amazes me how we can address our problems."

"We can have an impact in our community that improves the lives of those around us," McCook said.

He thanked the unit for efficiencies it developed in a program that has a recurring cost year after year.

McCook said the unit has saved more than two cents on the tax rate by developing efficiencies in foster care. "That's a big impact for a County our size."

"We're doing a better job at a reduced cost than what we were doing three years ago," McCook said. "Improving the lives of our neighbors, our friends, is important work. Continue doing what you do."



The directory shows the approach to a cemetery, like the McCormick Cemetery off Blues Farm Road, above, and what the cemetery looks like, below.

