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An inside look at Sampson's industries

By Kristy D. Carter
kcarter@clintonnc.com

Clinton's Chuck Spell has an abundance of knowledge when it comes to what makes Sampson County a part of the developing industry world — he's worked in the business field himself for a quarter of century.

"Sampson County can offer a dependable diverse workforce that has a sense of pride," Spell said. Currently, Sampson County can offer employees a variety of career opportunities from agricultural, industrial, construction, trades, medical, and service oriented fields."

As for the future, Spell said he feels Sampson County is in line to continue being a global society.

"We are truly a global society, with everything at our fingertips," he explained. "We must change and adapt our thinking, marketing and our work habits to remain competitive both from a product and an employee perspective. We not only compete globally but also with other parts of our state for employees. We have to change and grow to be not only the best at what we do, no matter what industry it is, but also become the best at what we don't do yet. That is how Sampson will succeed now and in the future."



Courtesy photo

Chuck Spell and Erika Starling, members of the Sampson Community College Board of Trustees, sign paperwork to transfer land from the Clinton 100 Committee to the college for the truck driving facility.

See SAMPSON 2C

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SAMPSON from 1C



Courtesy photo

Chuck Spell has spent the last 26 years working with local industry, including the last three with Hog Slat.

Born and raised in Clinton, Spell is a graduate of Clinton High School. He earned a bachelor of science in mechanical engineering from North Carolina State University and a master of business administration from Campbell University.

Spell married his high school sweetheart, Lisa, and they have two children, Nicole, a junior at NC State studying mechanical engineering, and Austin, a freshman at Clinton High School.

Out of college, Spell started his professional career working for Schindler Elevator Corporation, where he worked for 23 years in various roles, including managing director. For the last three years, he has been working with Hog Slat as the director of manufacturing.

"I was very fortunate to be able start my career at Schindler Elevator Corporation and work with an amazing group of people," Spell said. "I am equally as fortunate to have been able to join the Hog Slat team and become a part of a vital part of Sampson County's economy,

agribusiness. The family oriented culture at Hog Slat and the rich history in this community makes working here very rewarding. Hog Slat is celebrating its 50 year anniversary this year, and I am thankful to be a part of their organization."

Spell has spent his entire career in manufacturing, and says he fully understands the needs of existing industry, as well as the requirements for industry seeking new locations.

"Even before my days at State, it was my goal to come back home and work and raise my family," Spell shared. "It has been a blessing to be able to do this. Too many of our young people want to leave and start their lives elsewhere. Early in my working career I chose to become involved in community related activities."

Outside of work, Spell has been very dedicated to the Sampson community, having served in various capacities on multiple boards. He served as the chairman of the Economic Development Advisory Board,

Clinton-Sampson Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, was a member of the Triangle South Workforce Development, and past president of the Sampson Community College Foundation Board. Currently, he is on the Sampson Community College Board of Trustees, CAFE, the Board of Adjustment for the City of Clinton and the Clinton 100 Committee, where he serves as

president.

"I believe that providing support and volunteering is vital to a community's success and growth," Spell said. "Being able to provide a perspective from existing industry to make changes to help and attract new businesses will only improve our way of life."

Spell says he like to stay active, serving his community and



Courtesy photo

Chuck and his wife, Lisa Spell.

See SAMPSON 3C

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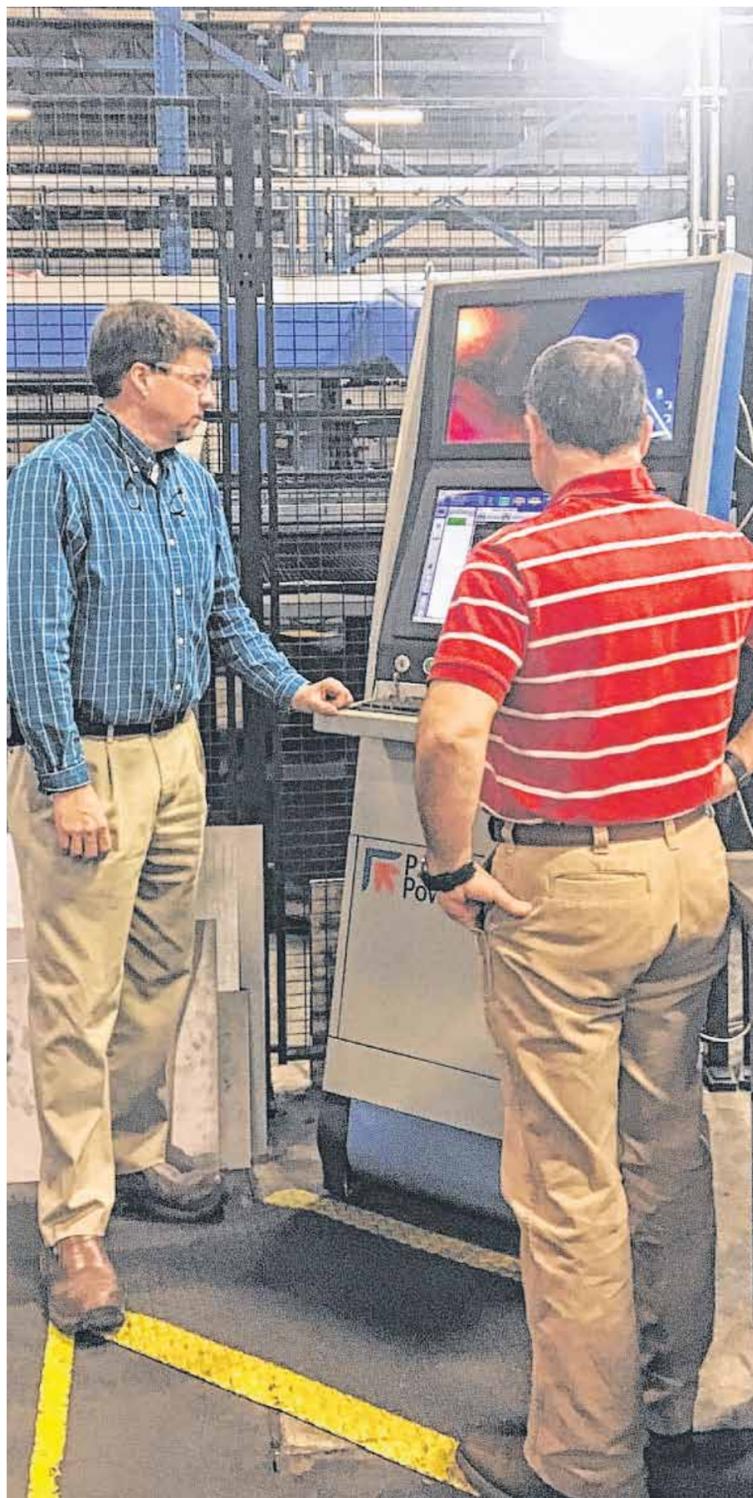
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SAMPSON from 2C



Courtesy photo

Chuck Spell inside the Hog Slat plant reviewing new sheet metal fabrication equipment.

the people of Sampson. As a part of the Sampson Community College Board of Trustees, he says he is excited to see the continual growth and progress being made at the college.

"The community college continues to grow and change," he said. "The new welding building will break ground soon, the Develop the East project will enhance and change the look of the college, as will the truck driver training project that is underway. The Clinton 100 Committee has donated a portion of land in the Industrial Park for this project."

Spell says he also likes serving on the CAFE board and being able to award grants to well-deserving teachers who are working to enhance the learning going on in their classrooms. As a member of the Chamber board, he says he is able to help drive Sampson County forward, helping showcase the members through various events and functions.

"While attracting new business and industry is a top priority, growth must always start from within by supporting what's already here," Spell explained. "Again referring to my former and current employer as great examples, we already have well-established companies here who have had the vision and commitment to put Sampson County on the global map for the products they make right here in our own back yard."

When asked to describe Sampson County, Spell had one word — home.

"I can't imagine growing up or living anywhere else," Spell said. "I have a passion for this community and the people. Although, certain resources may

be hard to find in Sampson, as it is related to employees, what we have are extremely proud, hard-working people, that do their best to succeed in whatever they do."

During his time as part of the local industry field, Spell says he has seen many changes.

"Attracting new and exciting industry is not an easy task," Spell said. "Many times we compete with areas that are more industrialized and can offer a more industrial diverse workforce. The bottom line is that we need to add to our industrial base in Sampson County."

In his opinion, Sampson Community College is playing an important role in this endeavor by bringing industrial programs that offer potential or current industries the skilled workforce needed to complete the job.

"Finding a skilled available workforce is a huge plus when a company is looking to locate in your area, or when an existing business is trying to determine if adequate resources are available to make local expansion a viable option," he added. "The college offers many programs that would benefit a new or expanding business and showcasing this is a must."

In his spare time, Spell said he enjoys restoring old cars, watching his son play soccer on the Clinton High School junior varsity soccer team, watching his brother, Brad, coach the state champion soccer team and serving as the vice president of the Ol' Lightningrods Car Club, which raises money annually for the Relay for Life-American Cancer Society.

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Downtown Clinton flourishes with new businesses



File photo

Jess's Soaps has a line of many different scents.



File photo

Jess's Soaps offers body soaps, lotions, body sprays and room sprays — all made naturally.

By Kristy D. Carter
kcarter@clintonnc.com

Downtown Clinton's Courthouse Square is the prime location for businesses to set up shop and help the city continue its efforts to grow and be simply a part of Sampson County.

In the past year, business owners like Jessica Bashlor, Beth Cuevas, Darue Bryant and many more have in some way added to the business scene by opening up a new and unique business, relocating a current business to a more central location or taking a business from strictly online to having a storefront.

Bethie Lou's Vintiques, a one-of-a-kind business located in the old Family Christian Store on Main Street, opened last summer and offers a large variety of collectibles and locally made items.

"Within our first two weeks of

being open in downtown Clinton we were made to feel so welcome by the community and other downtown business owners," Cuevas said. "We have also had shoppers from as far as Wilmington and Goldsboro."

A few years ago, Bashlor needed a hobby and started making homemade goat milk soaps, lotions, body and room fragrances in her home. The stay-at-home mom got busy and began selling the items out of her home and online. Three years later, she found she had more orders than her at-home business would allow, and decided to open a space in the downtown area.

"This is a business which Downtown Clinton is proud to say has grown while having products in Simply NC just across the court square," Mary Rose, planning director and Main Street manager, said. "They have now expanded into their own space which will afford them the opportunity to manufacture their products and have a storefront presence in Downtown Clinton."

The actual process of getting a bar of the moisturizing soap isn't just about calling Jessica up and asking for a few bars to be shipped to your home or walking into the store and making an immediate request. It's about a three-week process, if Jessica has all the ingredients in stock at the time the order is made.

The mixing process of making soap takes about an hour. While, Jessica admits this is the fun part for her, it's a chemistry lesson — a subject Jessica admits she hated in school. Jessica has to make sure their oils

are properly mixed with the right amount of each oil. She also has to make sure the lye mixture and oil mixture are the right temperatures before mixing, if she wants the soap to turn out. The fragrance oils can be harmful to a users skin, Jessica said, so she has to make sure to add just the right amount of the fragrance oils so that her customers will be satisfied with the scent and texture of the soap.

Once a batch of soap has been mixed and poured into the molds, the soaps must sit for 12-24 hours to harden and set. Once the soap has set to the perfect consistency, the single loaf is cut into individual bars. Each batch makes 33 bars of soap. Jessica isn't finished here. She must then let the soap cure for three to four weeks before it's available for sale to the customers.

The bars are about four ounces in size. A bar of the soap should last about two weeks with one person using the bar, which is about typical for other brands of soap.

Bryant has explored several different business options in the downtown area. Recently, he opened a barbershop just across the street from the courthouse.

"I chose downtown as the location of my business is ownership," Bryant explained. "Often many entrepreneurs are convinced that strip malls pave the way to success because of high traffic and the expectation of capitalization of other brand name businesses. However, nothing screams success like owning your business, the building and property. There is a sense of pride and accomplishment when ownership is achieved."

According to Rose, other businesses have plans to locate downtown in the coming future. Bailey Miller is opening Bailey's Belles Salon on W. Main Street, as well as Angelia Freeman opening DIY Sewing Inc. above the Model Barber Shop.

Rose added that downtown Clinton has had individuals inquire about locations for second floor residential and breweries/tap rooms, but no current plans are underway.

"Downtown is alive with more

retail and service related businesses than we have seen in over 30 years," Rose shared.

According to Rose, the planning staff fields inquiries weekly from individuals investigating opening in downtown Clinton.

"We consider every caller as a potential new business to downtown and take time to discuss our incentives, events, and other amenities available to a business located in downtown Clinton," Rose said. "We also believe it is important to go over what our different Clinton Main Street Program Committees are working on in the way of public art, beautification, and special events and promotions.

The Clinton Main Street Program uses the four point National Main Street Approach of Promotion, Organization, Design, and Economic Vitality to encourage preservation based economic development in Downtown Clinton.

"Working committees, partners, and businesses working together to bring visitors to downtown and encouraging citizens to shop local," Rose explained. "These groups working together makes downtown Clinton special. As I speak to business owners while visiting their stores, restaurants, offices or service related businesses, I am hearing about and meeting people who are driving from Fayetteville, Goldsboro, Wilmington, and surrounding areas to visit downtown Clinton. We are truly a destination."

Clinton's city manager agrees.

"You either let things happen to you or you make things happen," Clinton City Manager Tom Hart said. "Downtown Clinton is making things happen. I have to admit when considering taking the city manager job in Clinton, the state of the downtown played a role in the decision. When you take notice of all the effort going on, you quickly see downtown Clinton has decided to take control of it's future, which says a lot about the health of a city."

Copy editor Kristy D. Carter can be reached at 910-592-8137, ext. 2588.

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Courtesy photo

Darue Bryant opened Wall Street Barbers just across from the courthouse.



Courtesy photo

Broderick Bennett is one of the barbers working at Wall Street Barbers.

Juntos continues to serve

By Chase Jordan
cjordan@clintonnc.com



File Photo

Members of the Juntos Club spends time with students from the University of North Carolina Pembroke during a cultural event.

years, we've been able to partner with the Juntos Club, which I think is really good because we're able to bring the youth in and they're helping by guiding those meetings and developing those meeting with a new and fresh perspective. It's great to see that youth are involved in these programs."

With about 20 partners, Edwards and members of the Juntos Club would love to see more participants come to the table. The police department may be reached by calling 910-592-3015; or by email at dedwards@cityofclintonnc.us

"If there's resources or services that they provide, they'll be front row, fact-to-face with the community," Edwards said.

Besides the annual event, Edwards said officers are always ready to be of assistance for residents in Clinton.

"We'll always make ourselves available," he said. "If there's a group or church or someone who would like for us to come out and speak and talk about any individual concerns. It can be anything police or law enforcement related."

In 2018, Juntos students participated in a theatrical experience, "An Evening of Culture," through the University of North Carolina at Pembroke's Acto Latino — a Spanish Theatre organization. The opportunity gave students a chance to ask questions about college or majoring in art. With goals of going to college, Juntos members also received a visit from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Apple Service-Learning - a student-led program that brings people together through civic engagement through learning initiatives, internships, courses and fellowships.

In February, the students participated in STEM (Science, Tech-

See JUNTOS 15C



File Photo

Gilson Escobar enjoys showing Clinton Police Officer Matt Bland pictures of a K-9 during a previous community outreach event at Clinton High School.

During professional development day for teachers, students enjoyed an extra day away from school.

As an adviser for Juntos, Katherine Rivera was proud to see its members helping parents sign their children up for kindergarten during a registration period as translators for Hispanic members of the community.

"They could be sleeping in, yet they're volunteering," she said about the 20 students. "They're volunteering constantly and doing different things."

The Juntos program, which means "together" in Spanish, began in 2007 in Raleigh and is now active in several other states. It's associated with North Carolina's Cooperative Extension's 4-H program. In addition to helping people in the community, its overall purpose is to help Latino students graduate from high school and have access to higher education. The three goals of Juntos are to: see more Latino youth benefit from 4-H programming; build relationships with Latino communities so they benefit and become involved in 4-H and other Extension programming; and empower Latino families with the resources needed to achieve their educational goals for their youth.

Rivera provides assistance to students in Clinton City Schools. At Sampson Middle School, Juntos membership consist of about 13 students

and more than 30 students at Clinton High School.

"I think it's a great," she said. "I like the size of it and I would love to be able to serve more kids."

One of the biggest fundraisers to help with the growth is "Kicking It With Juntos," an indoor soccer tournament, held annually inside the Sunset Avenue School gymnasium. Funds are used for trip and events throughout the year, with additional food donations going to local food pantries. In 2019, the students are heading to Camp Rock, a retreat center in the state. They will also honor the achievements of students during a banquet to celebrate milestones of its members.

A major outreach initiative is the Annual Latino Community Meeting with the Clinton Police Department. Each year, local parents have an opportunity to connect with resources in Sampson County and nearby. Along with the police department, some of the other organizations present during the

meeting included the Sampson County Parks and Recreation, the Clinton Fire Department, Sampson Community College, Eastpointe, U Care, and the Sampson County Health Department. In Spanish, CPD officers will talk about traffic stops, checkpoints, reporting crimes, sexting and social media. During the annual events, topics are selected by Juntos members and officers.

Police Chief Donald Edwards said it was created to build bridges in the community by reaching out and providing resources. Edwards believes the event allows residents to bring up concerns regarding law enforcement. It started several years ago with the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church before moving to the high school. Edwards said working with both organizations made the effort successful.

"We not only talk about law enforcement concerns, but we also talk about community concerns an other quality of life issues," Edwards said. "Over the last few



Courtesy Photo

Former Clinton Police Chief Jay Tilley greets a youngster at the fourth annual Latino Community Meeting, which began with a goal to open lines of communication to the local Spanish-speaking population.

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Efforts to create a brighter Clinton



File photo

Plastic cap murals designed by artist Denise Hughes and created by students from Sunset Avenue and Roseboro Elementary were installed along the Downtown Recycle Art Walk (DRAW), located on Ferrell Street, Clinton. The project was a collaborative effort between the Clinton Main Street Program's Design Committee, the Sampson Arts Council and the Public Works Department of Clinton.

By Mary Rose
City of Clinton

Planning and downtown revitalization continue to be proven ways to create a stronger Clinton.

In 2019, the City of Clinton Planning and Development Department looks forward to beginning implementation of the City of Clinton Economic Development Strategic Plan adopted in December 2018. An Economic Development Strategic Plan Committee made up of citizens and business representatives will lead this endeavor.

This committee will utilize the nine economic development strategies identified in the plan to implement the plan. The strategies are Organization, Promotion, Design, Business Development, Downtown Development, Land Use & Environment, Highway Corridor, Transportation, and Community Resources.

Under each strategy goals and action items were identified as part of the planning process in

2018. The committee will attempt to meet plan goals by developing a work plan and taking action steps to achieve these goals. As an example, under design the committee would look for ways to create more attractive gateways into our community with gateway signage and landscaping. As the committee develops action items they will also need to identify ways to pay for these items such as grants, contributions, or fundraising activities.

Just as the Economic Development Strategic Plan committee begins on this new venture to implement plan goals outside of downtown in the greater Clinton area, the Clinton Main Street Program committees will continue their efforts to create a vibrant downtown Clinton. In recent years the Clinton Development Corporation has taken a more active role in assisting the Clinton Main Street Program with fundraising activities which enable Downtown committees such as the Promotion and Design committees to pursue projects which make downtown Clinton more attractive to investors, businesses, citizens, and visitors to our downtown area.

Since the economic downturn in 2008 over 20 new businesses have opened in downtown Clinton, with half of those businesses opening in the past two years. The Clinton Main Street Program Promotion Committee has raised funds for the first phase of what will be called "Milling to Melodies", a sound system which will play music along our downtown sidewalks. The Clinton Main Street Program Design Committee has been instrumental in developing partnerships which have placed additional public art in downtown Clinton in areas such as DRAW (Downtown Recycle Art Walk) along Ferrell Street. In 2019 the Design Committee will be completing it's first alleyway project off Lisbon Street called "Dash Way" with monies donated by the Downtown Dash Committee. This alleyway project will exhibit art by Sarah Rushing and also feature lighting, landscaping, a decorative bench and trash receptacle and an additional gateway feature in partnership with the Sampson Community College Welding Program.

New in 2018 was also our first Brunch & Bows event held in conjunction with Small Business Saturday which falls annually the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Brunch & Bows ticket holders enjoyed brunch at Alfredo's in downtown Clinton and also received discounts for area businesses not only in Downtown Clinton but throughout Clinton and Sampson County. The Small Business Saturday Committee, made up of partners and sponsoring organizations from across



File photo

City of Clinton crews, with the help of various city staff members and other groups, have worked to implement small decorative touches in and around the downtown. Two stone benches were installed, including this one near the corner of Wall and Elizabeth streets. Clinton's Main Street Program also saw to the hanging of the barn quilt, which incorporates the city's millstone logo. It has since been flanked by two other quilts.

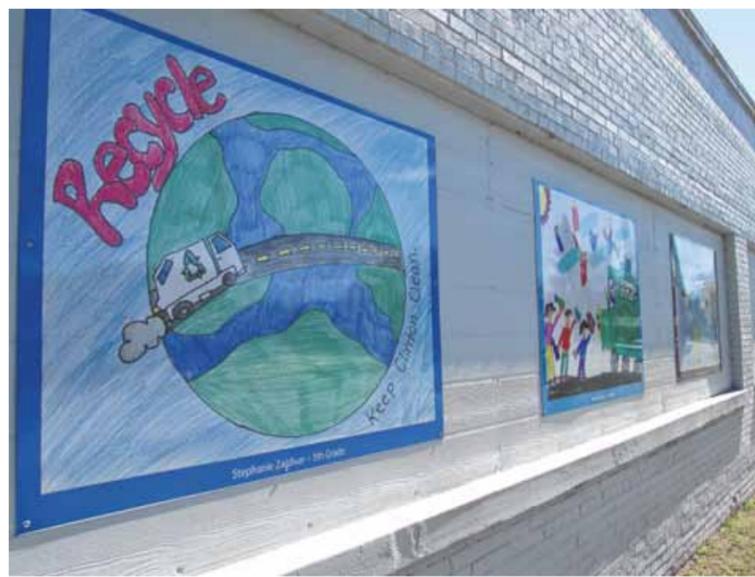
Sampson County works together to promote shopping local in Sampson County. Committee members, partnering organizations such as the Clinton Main Street Program, Clinton-Sampson Chamber and Sampson Community College Small Business Center along with local businesses will be working together to grow Small Business Saturday 2019 and welcome additional partners. For more information contact the Clinton Planning Department at 910-299-4904. These types of partnerships are strengthening our community and County. Watch for more events and activities citizens will be able to themselves participate in as 2019 progresses.

Revitalizing an historic downtown takes many citizens and partners working together in order to undertake strategies such as the National Main Street Four Point Approach which are proven successful.

Promotion, Design, Economic Vitality, and Organization are the key components of the National Main Street Approach used by the Clinton Main Street Program to move Downtown Clinton forward. Committees meet monthly to reach the goals of their work plans which are developed annually. Clinton Main Street Program Committee members, volunteers and partners understand the importance of working together, supporting program goals, assisting downtown businesses, and promoting Downtown Clinton as a vibrant City center with a variety of cultural, business, and governmental uses in which citizens may benefit from using.

We encourage citizens and visitors alike to follow downtown Clinton on Facebook and Instagram for more information about Downtown businesses, events and other activities.

Mary Rose is the director of the City of Clinton Planning Department and the manager of the Clinton Main Street Program.



File photo

Three winning art creations from a 'Design That Truck' contest courtesy of local students are now on display along Ferrell Street.



File photo

An overhaul on the outside the Powell's Insurance building, with work completed last June. The project has benefited from grants by the City of Clinton and Clinton-Sampson Chamber of Commerce. The alleyway will be the site of the next big downtown city art endeavor, with murals and lighting to be installed.



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File photo

A bicycle structure incorporating the City of Clinton's familiar millstone theme was installed in front of J.C. Holliday Library in Clinton. Funds for the art piece came from the Downtown Dash Committee, which has annually presented the city a check from money raised by the group's annual 5K, 10K & Fun Run held in conjunction with the street fair.

Building Sampson's infrastructure

Water, other projects abound to prep county for growth



File photo|Sampson Independent

Sampson County Public Works director Lin Reynolds address the Sampson Board of Commissioners. Reynolds' department has worked to boost water customers while expanding the county's system, both for the benefit of residents and industry.

By Lin Reynolds

Sampson Public Works

The Sampson County Public Works Department is located at 827 Southeast Boulevard in Clinton. Our 18-person staff is responsible for the maintenance on the county's 26 buildings, 550 miles of water lines and all the county road signs.

Seven of our employees make up our building division (four facilities maintenance staff and three administrative support personnel). Their building maintenance work is complemented by contract work (such as landscape, heating/air and janitorial contractors) and funded by county tax dollars.

Public Works is responsible for maintaining all the green road signs in the county. These signs are crucial during emergency events to aid locating people in need of emergency services. Also, many departments use these signs to locate customers in need of services such as county transportation. These signs are funded by county tax dollars.

The county has a total of 12 employees assigned to the public water division which consist of utility service personnel, customer service and administrative staff (support). The support staff performs all the billing and paperwork for all the water sold by the county. The utility service personnel read meters, maintain the wells and water lines, conduct required testing and trouble shoot concerns. The water system is an enterprise system which means it pays for itself by water sales and does not cost any tax dollars to operate.

The water system has two wells in operation with an additional well under construction and anticipated to be on line within the next eighteen months. Water distribution lines stretch 550 miles throughout the county, serving over 5,860 customers. This is an increase of 7.5 percent from last year due to the 3-month long reduced tap fee of \$100 (235 new customers). Historically, our system would increase average 1.8 percent per year, but the county gained 408 new customers last year instead of the normal 100 per year.

The reduced tap fee initiative was approved by the water

board last winter. We hoped to add around 100 new customers. The first two months went well with new applications. The last month the new customers rolled in and the numbers totaled 235. The water board approved the measure based on the premises that it would generate new customers along existing lines with minimal investment from the water system. Each reduced tap cost the system about \$950 dollars and the return on investment is about two years.

The department was impacted by the recent hurricane by having a total of four water line breaks. These breaks were isolated and contained. All damages have been repaired except one on NC 24 East of Clinton. It is scheduled within the next 60 days. We did see a spike in new taps right after the hurricane. We feel like the spike was due to our customers having access to water during the power outages and non-customers wanting safe drinking water available at all times.

The county also owns four overhead water tanks that serve the system. The overhead tanks serve several purposes. One purpose is to have a water source available at any given time. Another purpose is to provide adequate water pressure throughout the system by the weight of the water hydraulically. Tanks also store enough water to allow the pumps to turn off when the capacity is reached.

The water system has numerous projects in the works, listed below.

Upcoming projects

- New Well at NC 403/I-40 & Filtering system — Total Cost is \$3.142 million. Golden Leaf grants total \$555,000, EDA grants total \$685,000. Water system investment would be the remainder \$1.902 million. The date of completion is projected to be early 2020.
- NC 403 Water Treatment Plant — Total Cost is \$2.15 million. Golden Leaf Grants total \$1 Million. Water system investment would be the remainder of \$1.15 million. The date of completion is projected to be late 2019.

- New Distribution lines — Bullard Pit Road, Lee Road, Wellie Lane and McKenzie Road have been chosen to have water lines added. These new additions will generate a minimum of 35 new customers at a cost of \$200,000.

- Johnston County Connection-Easy Street — Negotiations are still underway between Sampson and Johnston County to interconnect our systems with the first being on Easy Street. The total cost for this project is projected to be \$915K with each water system paying about 50 percent. This interconnect would allow Sampson County to sell water to Johnston County residents. Hopefully, this project will generate additional revenue for Sampson County that can be used to improve our infrastructure. This project is estimated to be complete by the summer of 2020.

- Johnston County Connection-Oak Grove — Negotiations are underway for a second connection on Oak Grove Church Road. The total

cost for this project is projected to be \$2.1 million with each water system paying about 50 percent. This project is estimated to be complete by the summer of 2021.

Looking toward future

Future projects that are being considered are the addition of a portion of King Road, Governor Moore Road and South McCullen Road. The water department staff is reviewing these roads and will be making a recommendation to the water board in the next few months.

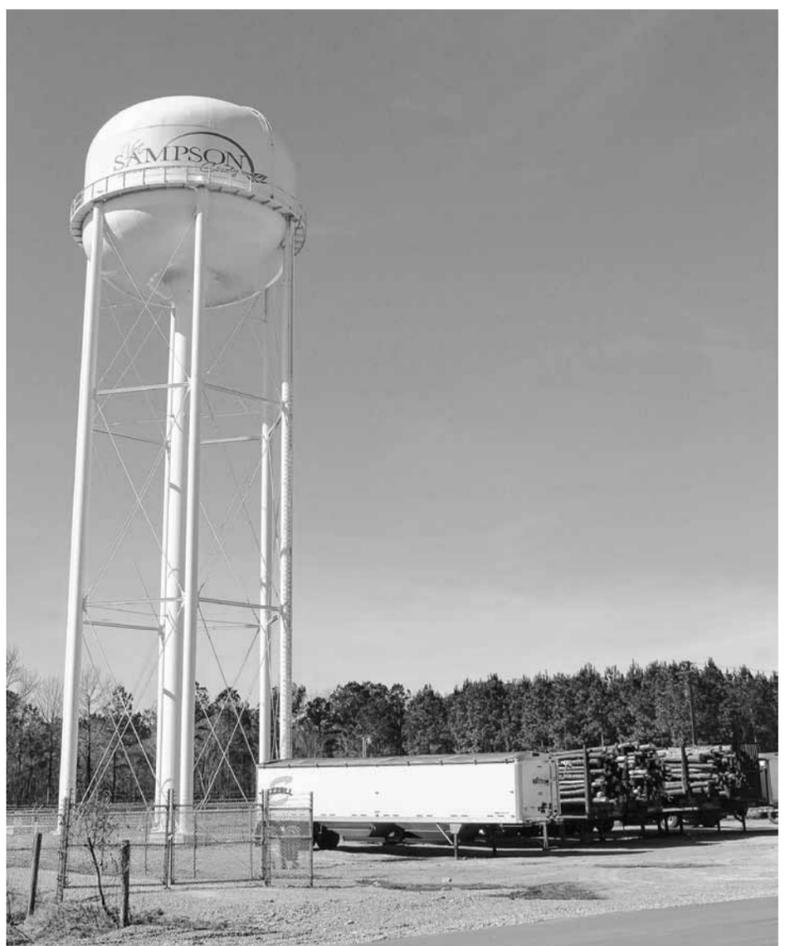
As stated earlier, Sampson County water system is an enterprise system that is required to support itself financially. Therefore, the public works department along with county officials are tasked to review any expansion to determine if it is financially feasible. The goal is to expand at every opportunity if warranted as the system grows financially.

Due to the vision and efforts of the county commissioners, the county manager and the public works director back in the mid 1990's, the water system in this county was born. Many engineers stated that it was not feasible, but here we are today with four phases complete for a total of 550 miles.

The current board of county commissioners along with county staff have the same passion for improving and expanding the water system. We understand the need to expand the system when it is economically feasible. Serving the citizens in this county is the goal. Safe drinking water is crucial for use at home, work, school, etc. Water availability could attract new businesses to the county such as Enviva on NC 403/I-40.

Anyone interested in purchasing water or having water lines added to their road are encouraged to contact the public works department at 910-592-0188. There is a petition for addition form that we will ask you fill out along with your neighbors. Staff will review the petition to determine if the road is a candidate for county water installation.

Lin Reynolds is the public works director for the County of Sampson.



File photo|Sampson Independent

A water tank at the Enviva site is one of many local investments in infrastructure to ensure the success of the plant and lay the groundwork for future development along the I-40 interchange.

Clinton PD strives for better, safer city

Department seeks to cultivate community relationships



By Donald Edwards
Clinton Police Department

2018 was my first full calendar year as Chief of Police, and the City of Clinton also welcomed some very positive additions to an already phenomenal team, like our new City manager, our Fire Chief, and Public Works Director. Inside the Clinton Police Department, we've got a lot of talented people who are all fairly new in their current positions, and together we all look back at events and data to determine our strengths as well as where we might improve.

The Clinton Police Department is an accredited agency with CALEA and that is something we are very proud of. We are currently working toward our fourth accreditation. CALEA is about using the best policing practices, including data driven crime suppression. But CALEA is not the only reason we reflect on the past to plan the future; we believe it is simply good business. We assess our performance constantly throughout the year, and then annually some of the numbers are included in the end of year reports.

One thing I have said before and I can't express it enough — the strength of the Clinton Police De-

partment is in our people and their commitment to the citizens of this community.

I think this was best illustrated around September and October 2018. We all remember that Clinton and Sampson County experienced some tough times during the hurricanes, but the community saw the entire city staff performing at their best. Even when things looked bad, there always seemed to be positive atmosphere, with neighbor helping neighbor, and sometimes strangers reaching out to help strangers.

It wasn't just the preplanning or work during the event that made me proud to be a part of this team; it was the genuine commitment to serve, collecting and delivering food and supplies, as well as partnering with other community leaders to deliver items to citizens. The highlights of this devastating event weren't the destructive images shared in the news or through social media, it was being able to watch the City come together as if it was one big family.

The concern the community shares for one another has helped us establish partnerships that allow the Clinton Police Department to work with other leaders to focus on quality of life concerns like mental health issues, opioid misuse, and creating safer neighborhoods. The police department initiated several projects or programs over the past few years and still work diligently to maintain these. I've spoke before about our work on mental health and our ability to certify our staff in Crisis Intervention Team training because of our partnerships. The agency now has nearly 75 percent of its staff certified and with the support of Eastpointe we are going on our third year carrying the life-saving medicine Narcan in every police vehicle.

One partnership that we have been part of for a number of years is the Sampson County Substance



File photo|Sampson Independent

Citizens can reach out anonymously to the Clinton Police Department through its Tip411 program.

Abuse Coalition. During this past year we have been able to work side by side with outstanding community leaders from the City and County in planning and organizing the Sampson County Opioid Prevention and Education Summit. The opioid epidemic has been spotlighted throughout the news, and this team, as well as the summit, is able to bring the community together with resources and hope.

The Clinton Police Department also continues to work with partners in the community focusing on safer communities. We joined leaders for stop the violence rallies and partnered to host our second National Night Out in Newkirk Park. We also hosted our 6th annual Latino Community meeting, again working with the wonderful young leaders in Clinton City School's Juntos Club. These events are crucial to showing unity within our community as well as a shared passion to end needless violence and improve the quality of life of every citizen. Each year I think these events get bigger and better, and it is the members of the department who work closely with our partners that make it great. We enjoy

these opportunities to share ideas as well as concerns. But citizens know they don't have to wait for an event to reach out to us. In fact, if they wish they can even reach out anonymously through our Tip411 program. The text-a-tip and 'tipcpd' phone app continue to serve Clinton and the surrounding area very well.

Eastern Carolina Regional Housing Authority continues to allow us to use an apartment in Dogwood Circle as a substation. Citizens are encouraged to visit with us at the substation and we hope to increase the time staff is available there over the next year. We have also been a part of several community events in Dogwood Circle throughout the year, ending with our second annual Santa at the Substation. Thanks to a very generous donation and support from the Clinton Police Club, we provided several kids who visited us with bicycles for Christmas. During 2018, we continued our partnership with community partners like Olive Grove Church, Higher Level Ministries, and Mission and Purpose Ministries on various community projects that focus on unity and youth. Olive Grove Church hosted us again for our second annual Police Summer Camp. I am pleased to add that this year we enjoyed a huge increase in support from businesses and individuals in the community.

As I think about safer communities, I feel it is important to note that despite some high profile incidents in 2018, the City of Clinton saw a reduction in crime. The police department's clearance rates, which reflect the percentage of crimes resolved by arrest or other successful mean, continue to be above the national average. We achieve this because of the men and women of the police department and their relationships with the citizens.

The Clinton Police Department either hosted or participated in over 40 community events in 2018, and this is outside their normal work assignments. I honestly hope we enjoy



File photo|Sampson Independent

A group of campers learns how to dust for fingerprints during a summer camp hosted by the Clinton Police Department, one of many community outreach events in which the department takes part.



File photo|Sampson Independent

Clinton Police Department Officers Dulce Banos and Ariel Nunez talk with Juntos members during a past Latino Community Meeting. The department recently held its sixth annual event.

PD from 8C

this type success in 2019. No Police Department can be successful without the confidence and support of the community. The Clinton Police Department will never waste an opportunity to engage with the public and I am very proud of the men and women of the Clinton Police Department who share that passion. I can't name them all, but there are many individuals, churches, and businesses that have shown their support to us throughout the year in one way or another and we are very thankful.

In 2018, I witnessed as sworn and civilian staff reached out to the community and were received in a mutual embrace of compassion, trust, and respect. These relationships don't develop overnight. They take dedication and hard work, and they represent the City of Clinton that I have been blessed to serve for nearly 26 years.

As I look ahead for 2019, I look forward to continuing to serve the citizens of Clinton alongside the outstanding men and women of the Clinton Police Department.

Donald Edwards is the chief of police for the Clinton Police Department.



File photo|Sampson Independent

For the past two years, the Clinton Police Department has partnered with Olive Grove Church, Higher Level Ministries, and Mission and Purpose Ministries for an annual summer camp, which culminates with a "block party" on the last day. Here, Police Chief Donald Edwards gives out glow-in-the-dark necklaces to attendees at the party.



File photo|Sampson Independent

Clinton Police conducting an investigation in 2018.



File photo|Sampson Independent

Clinton Police Cpl. Tyler Williams and Brittany Locklear load a box of items into a trailer manned by Clinton Fire Capt. Robby Owen and Engineer Robert Rosario. The departments teamed with the community to collect supplies during the recovery effort after Hurricane Florence.

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Child Advocacy Center helps fight abuse



By Jimmy Thornton
Sampson County Sheriff

Sampson County Sheriff's Office has experienced a rise in child physical and sexual abuse cases in the county over the recent years.

With this rise the sheriff's office had to dedicate two detectives to work these type of cases. It was quickly discovered that the detectives were spending numerous hours outside the county transporting and/or accompanying the families to forensic interviews and medical services at child advocacy centers within the state. When a child reports physical or sexual abuse there is a method used by child advocacy centers that

puts the best interest of the child first. Sampson County Sheriff's Office was fully committed to this type of service and felt a local center would be beneficial for the families in Sampson County. Sampson County Sheriff's office along with other professionals in the community worked together to begin Sampson County Child Advocacy Center.

There are a total of 80 counties in North Carolina being served by a child advocacy center. Sampson County joined this movement in 2013 and began the process for developing a center with Sampson County Sheriff's Office being involved from the beginning. The center began providing services to children in the county in 2015 and now is a fully operational center offering multiple services to abused children. Currently the center has provided services to approximately 630 child victims from Sampson County since it began in 2015. Sampson County Sheriff's Office has been involved in approximately 41 percent of all cases served through the CAC. The CAC also serves children referred by the Department of Social Services and Clinton Police Department.

Sampson County Child Advocacy Center is a non-profit agency that provides a centralized, safe, and child-friendly facility to minimize trauma to victims of sexual and physical abuse and also to their non-offending family members. Each center is an independent agency and relies on their local community for support.

By bringing together collaborative partners, such as local child protective services, law enforcement, prosecutors, medical and mental health providers, CAC's can make a positive dif-



Life-sized silhouettes holding pinwheels were part of the child-friendly design at the Child Advocacy Center.

File photo

ference in the lives of abused children by bringing professionals to the child instead of asking the children and their families to access services through many different portals. The children are now able to go to one place and tell their story one time to one person. This minimizes the re-victimization of children from having to talk about the incident multiple times to multiple people. Sampson County Child Advocacy Center offers essential services to the child victims and their families at absolutely no cost to the victim's family. These services include forensic interviews, medical exams, child/family advocacy, and court advocacy. In a cost benefit analysis it was found that there was a savings of \$1,318 per case in the prosecution of cases that received services through a child advocacy center. It is also noted that for every dollar spent on a CAC, there is benefit of \$3.33 provided.

The center relies on grants and community funding in order to remain operational. The center currently receives grants from Governor's Crime Commission, Department of Health and Human Services, and United Way of Sampson County. All the services offered are not fully covered by those grant sources therefore the center relies heavily on the community to support the services. Recent events have left the child advocacy center in a critical stage so far as funding and location. Volunteers in the community have come together to raise funds and maintain the services offered. The CAC is also currently looking for a new location

to provide services in the county as the current location will no longer available after September 2019.

The community can assist the CAC in numerous ways. Several churches, schools, and community organizations have donated needed items for the abused children such as snacks, water/juice, blankets and comfort items, volunteer time, and monetary donations. Many are working on fundraising efforts with three upcoming events already planned. If you would like to assist the CAC or make a donation then please call the office directly at 910-490-9100 for more information on what you can do.

Having Sampson County Child Advocacy Center not only saves the county money by providing services locally at no charge to families, but it also keeps county employees in Sampson County. Detectives were spending an average of six hours per day, per case out of the county when the children were being seen at another CAC within the state. Having a local CAC keeps the detectives in the county and minimizes the appointment times to an average of two hours per case. Sampson County Sheriff's Office is committed to supporting the services of Sampson County Child Advocacy Center and has been pleased with this partnership on how it is benefiting the child and family. Together with all of our partner agencies and the community, we can create a world where children will be free from harm.



Sarah Bradshaw, director of the Sampson County Department of Social Services, places pinwheels in downtown Clinton in honor of Child Abuse Prevention Month last year.

File photo



Owner Eugene Pearsall – A man for the people



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"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."
- Coretta Scott King

Expanding Sampson's economy

With land, money in hand, county pushes forward

By Chris Berendt
cberendt@clintonnc.com

Sampson County officials are making an unprecedented push for economic development, and have quite literally put their money where their mouth is.

That money is the Economic Development Reserve Fund, implemented in the 2018-19 budget. The goal is to add annual deposits of \$250,000 until the fund reaches at least \$5 million. There was \$1.5 million, previously designated for loan reserves, put in as an initial deposit this fiscal year along with the first \$250,000 installment, meaning the county currently has \$1.75 million total.

"It's very encouraging and very satisfying to have that," John Swope, executive director of the Economic Development Commission, said of the fund. "This allows the commissioners to take that next step in evaluating properties. These funds will allow the county to develop product for the future. Is that future six months, six years? We'll see. But this is a great step."

Swope said that in the not-too-distant future, the Board of Commissioners will likely hire a consultant to analyze the county in finding the best sites to develop. That could be north toward I-40, west on N.C. 24, south toward Wilmington. It will be up to an outside analyst, objective professionals, to break down possibilities.

County officials explained the fund as being initiated to "proac-



Courtesy photo

A look at Enviva, which has given the county a boost in tax base. Sampson leaders are looking for the next Enviva to take the county further.

tively plan for growth," the goal being to use those funds to leverage state and federal grant dollars to purchase property and develop infrastructure for industrial sites.

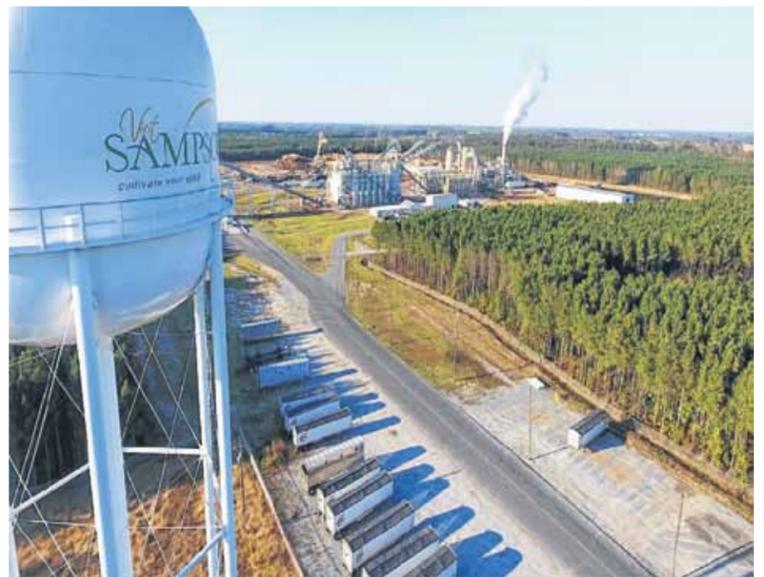
"I think it's going to pay big dividends; in fact, I think it already has," Wooten said of the fund. "It's gotten some people's attention. I'm tired of standing in line waiting for some other entity — statewide or regional — to send us a prospect. I want to be able to go out and recruit the businesses that fit us."

On an ongoing tour around the county, Wooten has sought public input regarding that economic development. He said it is vital to Sampson's sustainability that the county move forward in earnest.

He praised the work of previous boards and county administrative officials in attracting businesses such as Enviva Pellets.

Seeds planted years ago brought Enviva and its sizable investment and jobs to the Faison area of Sampson. In 2017 and 2018, the

first full years Enviva has been here, the company also paid close to \$1 million before grant-back incentives. **See EXPANDING 12C**



Courtesy photo

A water tower rose from the interchange to service existing industry such as Enviva, as well as future development in the surrounding area.



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EXPANDING from 11C



Courtesy photo

A look at the county-owned tracts located off Interstate 40 in northern Sampson.

While Sampson County is in sound financial shape, county manager Ed Causey said, growth will be key.

Funding the reserve fund may not yield significant revenue returns in the short term, he noted, but it was crucial to have a sustained long-term commitment to investing in the fund. The county

manager said that, with a standing mandate from commissioners not to hike tax rates, finding standing revenue streams was vital.

“My concern is, over time, if in fact we are going to support schools and other partners we have, we have got to figure out a way to increase revenue,” said Causey. “It is not something that

we just want to do. If we are going to make the progress in the next five to 10 years that we made in the past five to 10 years, we are going to have to find a way to increase revenues for the county.”

That is where the fund comes in.

Wooten has rallied people in Sampson County for months, speaking to civic and community organizations, along with town forums and municipal meetings, about the fund and the importance of working together toward a common goal. He has also sought feedback on the way.

The county, he said, wants to be deliberate and transparent in this endeavor.

“We have to be on notice that this is the direction we want to go in economic development,” said Wooten. “We need a unified front. We’re Sampsonians first. Regardless of where we get a business, all the students get a boost, all the property taxpayers benefit. Divided we get nowhere.”

“The only constant in this world is change,” he continued. “The only question is, is it going to

be change done to you, or change done by you? Let’s be in control of our destiny.”

More than a decade ago, Fibrowatt selected Sampson County as a destination for its next poultry litter plant in 2008, however in the year that followed the company was unable to secure a power purchase agreement crucial to the project, and the endeavor ultimately fizzled.

With land in hand on Exit 355 — the county purchased it for \$6,555 per acre for Fibrowatt — the county has assets. A large portion of that tract — approximately 200 acres — went to Enviva, leaving 97-100 acres to develop.

“This new money will allow for the purchase of other property, possibly at Exit 355 or elsewhere, and extend utilities if needed,” said Swope. That could be in the form of a new industrial park or another situation, he noted.

There is also land on Exit 348, whose potential is often discussed with potential industrial prospects, but the county does not own any of it.

“What we’ve been doing here

See EXPANDING 13C



Courtesy photo

A look at the nearly 100 acres owned by the county that flanks the site of Enviva Pellets Sampson.



Courtesy photo

A bird's eye view of the Enviva Pellets Sampson project, which expands over a 200-acre site in northern Sampson County.

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EXPANDING from 12C

in Sampson County is selling an idea," Wooten said. "Bring in your business and we'll do this for you or we'll do that for you.' It's awfully tough to sell a concept. So now we have this money, we've sort of taken the shackles off of John Swope."

Wooten has also said there were lessons learned in the Fibrowatt situation, and pointed to seeds planted more than a decade ago that allowed Enviva to bloom from the same soil. Swope said the Fibrowatt ordeal gave Sampson officials experience in dealing with luring in a big prospect. It also required the county to buy the land in the first place — land now occupied by Enviva.

"Even though Fibrowatt didn't come, I will say to my dying breath that it was a good decision," Swope stated. "You're at the interchange, all that frontage on the interstate and \$6,555 an acre. You can't buy land in Sampson County for that unless it's destitute land or wetlands."

Swope said that he can work with a prospect and be the county's liaison, but the decision to locate ultimately falls first with

the potential industry, and then with the local governing board and its citizens. Despite the form growth takes, it is most definitely a necessity, local officials said.

"You always have to be growing," said Swope. "If you stagnate and it stays the same, how many taxpayers are happy? Nobody. You need new business and industry to help shoulder that load, and maybe (taxes) can inch down. Being able to attract a Fibrowatt or an Enviva is valuable in several ways, notably tax investment."

Local officials are optimistic that the economic reserve fund is an investment toward big returns on the horizon.

"It says a lot about the commissioners' and the county's commitment to industrial development," said Swope. "It will certainly pay off. It's a good decision and I 100 percent applaud it. I'm very glad the county is going to have this tool in the near future."

Editor Chris Berendt can be reached at 910-592-8137 ext. 2587.

Student Services — Distinctly and simply Sampson



By Blair Hairr
Guest columnist

Sampson Community College finds great joy in serving the people of Sampson County. The administration, faculty, and staff of the college are committed to continuous improvement and, therefore, stay in a constant state of reflection. The two words that ring loudest in the last year are accessibility and communication.

Accessibility is important to the students of Sampson Community College. We live in a fast-paced, high-demand world. Many of our students are balancing the responsibilities of family, work, and academics. For this reason, the College continues to offer more online, hybrid, and 8-week courses. In fact, almost 50 percent of our course sections are offered in the online format. Students simply don't have the time to commit to campus.

Understanding this reality was a primary motivator of the college's new initiative, the Viking Express. The Viking Express is an accelerated degree program allowing eligible students the opportunity to earn an Associate in Arts degree in one year. Students will complete five 8-week consecutive sessions beginning

in August and ending in July. The sessions can be completed in an online or hybrid format.

Additionally, the College's admissions and enrollment process have been revised. In some cases, a student can begin taking SCC courses without ever stepping foot on campus. The admissions application, new student orientation, course registration, and payment can be completed entirely online. Student Services staff are readily accessible by phone or email for students who are unable to visit campus.

Lastly, clear and constant communication is one of the keys to student success. In addition to our social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the College now uses a mass notification system that students know as VikingWire. VikingWire allows the College to communicate events, registration information, weather alerts, campus closings, etc. to students via text messaging. Community members who would like to receive VikingWire alerts are welcome to subscribe by texting "VikingWire" to 67283.

Sampson Community College takes pride in the work we do and the people we serve. Anytime we can streamline or improve a process for the betterment of our students, we're going to exhaust all efforts in doing so. These are the things that make us distinctly and simply Sampson.



The accelerated program Viking Express allows students to earn college degrees faster. File photo

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Giving insight on Sampson's plans

Future success rides on economic development

By Ed Causey and Susan Holder
Sampson County

As you have likely read in recent issues of the Sampson Independent, the Sampson County Board of County Commissioners, and its chairman in particular, have spent a considerable amount of time over the past year zealously promoting the need for increased economic development.

Given all of the other important issues facing local government — education, public safety, health and human service needs — you may ask, why focus our immediate and enthusiastic attention here? The answer is that robust economic development positions us to address those other local government issues.

Sampson County is a beautiful rural county in the heart of south-eastern North Carolina. We have a myriad of small towns and rural communities that offer what those in more urban environments envy — pleasant, peaceful neighborhoods where you likely know your neighbors and they genuinely seem to care about each other.

Here, we have temperate weather that encourages us to be outside and offers us the opportunity to enjoy four distinct seasons of weather and the beautiful changes in our landscape that occur with the onset of each new season. We are situated so that if we want to see the ocean, we can travel east and be there in about an hour. Or, if we want to momentarily enjoy the advantages of a more urban setting, we can travel north, west or south and enjoy the offerings of larger communities.

We have beautiful rivers and the opportunity to enjoy them on a daily basis. We have good schools and a community college that endeavor to serve the needs of our entire population. However, if there is one common lament, it is that these benefits are not enough to entice our graduating youth to stay or return home given our lack of employment opportunities. Economic development provides the jobs that will offer the next generation the ability to live and prosper here and subsequently maintain our communities as inviting to the generations to follow.

And, as with most things, it's also about the money.

Economic development generates the dollars that ultimately maintain and enrich the quality of life for everyone. From an economic standpoint, the Board of Commissioners have done much in recent years to enhance Sampson County's financial stability.



County manager Ed Causey talks to Plain View residents about the importance of revenue sources for the long-term sustainability of Sampson County, as Public Works director Lin Reynolds and Board of Commissioners chairman Clark Wooten look on.

First, the fund balances in our General Fund have significantly increased. Second, we are making annual deposits into a reserve account for the maintenance of our buildings. Third, the Board of Commissioners has invested in our human infrastructure by increasing salaries and adjusting benefits for our workforce.

Such efforts signal to the state's Local Government Commission and our State Treasurer that our government is fiscally responsible. This has allowed us to refinance our existing debt, yielding a savings of about \$17 million over the remaining life of the debt. Such savings allow us to maintain, and even lower, the tax rate.

Consider that the county is not unlike a typical homeowner. The homeowner invested in the purchase of new home 15 years ago and has worked hard not only to pay the debt down, but also to maintain the dwelling in a satisfactory manner. The homeowner has also worked hard to put money away in a retirement savings account, as well as some monies for the education of two children.

Except now, the homeowner recognizes that college is only two or three years away for his children, and the cost of college is increasing beyond what he can save to pay for it. In addition, the homeowner and his car are both getting older, and he must consider the issues that come with his and his car's aging while as his children move closer to college age. The homeowner clearly has a conundrum — how to plan and pay for the future.

Sampson County also has the same conundrum. We've made prudent investments in our people and infrastructure, and we've taken steps to maintain that. We've put moneys in reserve accounts and increased our fund balances, but we still must plan and pay for a future that is ever changing. We have the responsibility for providing services that our citizens need or desire. We have an increasing aging population for whom services are likely to change or increase. We work within an economy that we know will see peaks of prosperity and endure the valleys of challenging conditions. (Ironically, it is in these stagnant or challenging times that the need for county services — and the costs to provide them — typically increase.) Like the homeowner, we have youth for whom we must fund education, and the struggle to provide adequate funding to do so intensifies with changes in technology, class room size and fluctuating state allocations.

Like the homeowner, we have done those things to ensure our financial position is sound. But, do we have the ability to generate sufficient revenues at a level that will allow us to continue supporting our existing services and adjust to changing needs? Moving forward, can we generate the revenues that are needed to support our existing services and encourage the economic development that is proposed?

In recent years, we have benefited from changes in the way sales tax has been allocated as well as

lottery allocations. This would be akin to the same homeowner receiving a small inheritance during the times of critical challenges. Unfortunately, in neither circumstance does the limited benefit eliminate the need for future revenue.

A county government basically has two primary ways of increasing revenues. We can increase taxes on our citizens, or we can encourage and promote increased business and economic development, which builds the tax base and our revenues. Our property tax rate is among the highest in the area; therefore, our commissioners have opted to tenaciously pursue economic development to generate the revenues to fund the programs and services our citizens desire.

In last year's Insight article, we referenced the teachings of authors Ronald Heifetz and Martin Linsky, leading instructors on leadership in government. In their book "Leadership on the Line," they observe that leadership in government would be easy if we only faced challenges for which we already have clear and standard solutions. To resolve many problems, they purport that we must use what is called adaptive change, whereby organizations and communities test their old ways of looking at challenges, seek new strategies, and learn new ways of operating.

To this end, Chairman Wooten has been a tireless cheerleader for economic development over the last year, meeting with our municipal boards and economic development entities, including a presentation at the Clinton 100 annual meeting in February, to explain the Board of Commissioners' decision to establish an economic development reserve fund and focus intently on promoting economic development.

However, as he has stated, for the Board's initiatives to be successful, our citizens and community leaders must embrace this not as a destination, but as a journey, a process of adaptive change. It will require input, a frank and productive dialogue, and a long-term commitment.

After we afford our citizens the opportunity for discussion, we can then seek the assistance of professional consultants to help formulate specific plans. We hope you will become engaged in this exciting opportunity.

Ed Causey and Susan Holder are the county manager and assistant county manager, respectively, for the County of Sampson.



The Sampson Board of Commissioners, led by chairman Clark Wooten, center, discusses the 2018-19 budget.

JUNTOS from 2C



The Clinton High School, Sampson Middle School Juntos Club receives appreciation for reaching out to Hispanic community members.

File Photo



The Juntos Club of Hobbton High School volunteers at many events in the community. Members and supporters are Martha Celis; Lizzy Lascars, president; Oscar Najera, vice-president; Milton Cinto, secretary; and Mireya Ramirez, treasurer.

File Photo

nology Engineering, and Math) Night by providing childcare and homework assistance. Before the new year, they helped the Sampson's 4-H program during the annual Court Square Street Fair. As the year continues, Juntos members are looking forward to spending time with students for the Read Across America, sponsored by the National Education Association. Along with other volunteers, they will celebrate reading and literacy in classrooms.

"I think the work is phenomenal," she said. "They're a great group of kids. I think they're definitely starting to see the value of what it's like to work for your community."

I think they're starting to realize that the recognition they're starting to get as a club is pretty cool," she said about the group's popularity. "When they wear their T-shirts and they go to Tropicana and people know what Juntos means."

A lot of input is placed on doing community service for organizations and places such as nursing homes, where they enjoy making gingerbread houses and donating items such as socks.

They are just a few of the students benefiting from the Juntos, a program developed by a National 4-H program. According to reports from the organization, Juntos improved grades for 91 percent of participants and 92 percent of participants gained more confidence about graduating from high school.

Like many others who benefit from their volunteer efforts, Rivera said their work in the community is remarkable.

"For me, that's very valuable when they're giving me ideas on how we can serve the community," Rivera said. "I think that's great."

Members of the Juntos Club was recently recognized for their achievements during the 4-H Achievement Night, held at the Sampson Agri-Expo Center in Clinton. During the special ceremony, Clinton High School and Sampson Middle School students were honored for their work in the organiza-

tion. Jessica Llamas and Abigail Rivera earned outstanding leadership awards. The following students earned the "Above and Beyond" award: Nancy Noyola, Gabriela Pineda, Arely Acosta, Isaac Rivera, Manuel Murillo, Jorge Llamas, and Ivan Ponce.

Under the guidance of Martha Celis, students from the the Hobbton High School program were also honored for their service. The members include Lizzy Lascars, president; Oscar Najera, vice-president; Milton Cinto, secretary; and Mireya Ramirez, treasurer.

Reach Chase Jordan at 910-249-4617. Follow us on Twitter at @SampsonInd and like us on Facebook.



18 U.S.C. 707



Courtesy Photo

Local teams enjoy participating in the "Kicking It With Juntos" soccer tournament.

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Are you ready to invest in your dreams? Because, we are ready to invest in you. Let's make your dreams a reality. We'll meet you out in the country.

Prestage Farms



Courtesy photo

Ron, Bill, Scott and John Prestage of family-owned and operated Prestage Farms.

For 35 years Prestage Farms has been an agribusiness mainstay in southeastern North Carolina, producing quality turkey and pork through the efforts of respected employees and farm families in Sampson and surrounding counties.

The company was founded in 1983 when Bill and Marsha Prestage, along with two of their sons, John and Scott, purchased the Swift turkey operation and feed mill in Harrells, N.C. With 22 employees and 18 contract growers, Prestage Farms produced about eight million pounds of turkey and 600,000 pounds of pork in its first year of operations.

Today, 35 years later, Prestage Farms is a major food company producing over a billion pounds of meat per year with farm production divisions based in South Carolina, Mississippi, Iowa and Oklahoma and a turkey processing division, Prestage Foods of N.C. Its newest addition to its family of companies is Prestage Foods of Iowa, a state-of-the-art hog harvest plant that opens this month.

"Over the last 35 years, it has been imperative for us to adapt to a changing marketplace in order to maintain and grow Prestage Farms in such a competitive industry," said Senior Vice President John Prestage. "This plant is the largest development in our company history and represents our single largest investment in the future of our swine business. It is an opportunity to expand our business into new territory and change along with an evolving market."

Prestage Foods of Iowa is a 700,000 square-foot processing plant located near Eagle Grove, Iowa that will employ nearly 1,000 workers when fully operational. This modern and efficient plant has a processing capacity of 10,000 market hogs per shift with initial operational plans for one 10-hour shift, five days per week. Prestage Farms will provide about 55 percent of the market hogs for the operation with the balance from area independent farmers.

Approximately 45 percent of the pork produced in the new plant will go to other facilities for further processing. Those processors will make products such as bacon, ham, and sausage. The other 55 percent will be sold in the international marketplace as well as U.S. grocery chains, stores and meat retailers and will be various cuts such as loins, tenderloins, ribs, and pork shoulders.

"Expanding into the pork processing sector is a big step for us," said Prestage. "We are excited about where this new path may lead us and we know that our progress going forward is only possible with the dedication and commitment of our Prestage associates throughout all of our divisions."

He concluded, "Our family deeply values the relationships we have built over our 35 years of business - relationships with our employees, growers, neighbors, other agricultural partners and suppliers, friends, and greater business community. We are proud to be a part of this community and know it's our strong agricultural roots here in Sampson County that are the foundation of our business."

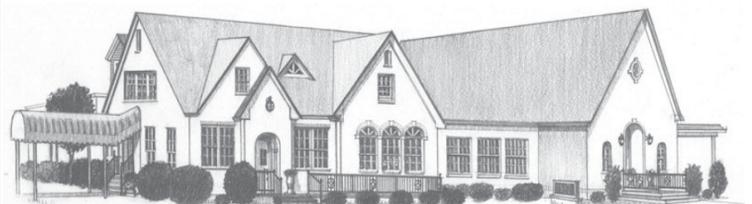
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College looks to grow, train local employees



By Amanda Bradshaw
Sampson Community College

Much has been said in the national and state news this past year about increasing the skills of the workforce. With the current national unemployment rate at 4 percent, it is safe to say that industries are now looking to train current employees to meet their workforce needs. This is simply more cost and time efficient for the industries as they work to meet the demand for their product or service. Much of these same national and state sentiments ring true here in Sampson County. Our local industries are working to complete orders for eager customers and need their workforce trained and in place ready to deliver the incoming orders.

In this past year, Workforce Development & Continuing Education (WD&CE) has seen a rapid shift in what the industries are demanding and what the employees are needing with regards to training. The current buzzwords of "short-term" and "in-service" are being echoed more and more through conversations with industry as we visit their sites or tour employers through the college campus. Fortunately, these words are at the heart of what we do in WD&CE. Simply put, our mission is to provide short-term workforce development training to a person looking to gain distinct skills for a job field specific to Sampson County.

As this theme has become more prevalent in this past year, so have our program dynamics. Based on the local workforce demands and industry conversations, we have begun several new initiatives to meet the needs identified.

The Sampson Community College (SCC) Truck Driver Program has expanded to include several Class B Driver's License class offerings. Industries such as local gas companies, delivery companies and private construction contractors have seen an increase in their need for licensed Class B drivers. The college has worked to meet this distinct need by purchasing a box truck and a dump truck to offer a variety of training vehicles for the students to use when training. The class is led by an SCC graduate that owns his own fleet of dump trucks and knows the increasing need for well-trained drivers personally. These classes are all held during the evening giving a student the opportunity to complete this license while still employed in less than a semester.

In working to meet the needs of the local industry, the department has had to consider that most students needing the training are already employed and



Sampson Community College now has fire academy training.

File photo

need to maintain employment while growing their job skills. The College has worked to create several academy style programs that meet not only the skills needed by industry but fit the schedules of the working class adults by holding classes either at night, on the weekends, or online. Such academies include:

- Fire Academy
- Trades Academy
- Night IT Academy

The Fire Academy is the college's inaugural class with 15 cadets attending. The cadets who successfully complete the program in September will have a Firefighter Certification from the Office of the State Fire Marshall, Traffic Incident Management Certification, a NC HAZMAT Level 1 Responder Certification as well as several other widely-recognized certifications. The Fire Academy was created to meet the simple need of volunteer departments in Sampson County needing more trained volunteers. As with most industries, fire departments are seeing an age gap issue and less volunteers but the need and workload of the departments are ever increasing. All of these classes are offered in the evening or on weekends to accommodate work and school schedules of attendees and volunteer firefighters already serving in Sampson County. Active volunteer members working to complete the classes needed for the Firefighter Certification are welcome to attend any specific classes they may be needing.

The Trades Academy was created to allow students an opportunity to receive upon successful completion, certifications in such areas as Basic Ammonia Refrigeration, Masonry, Welding and Fork Lift Operation. The certifications the students receive are state and nationally recognized as a way of helping the student remain marketable. Each of these skillsets are sought out by industries locally, statewide, and nationally. The goal is to continue the Trades Academy in the fall semester with the addition of HVAC, Electrical and Plumbing. Each class is offered in an evening session, two-nights a week, and can be completed in

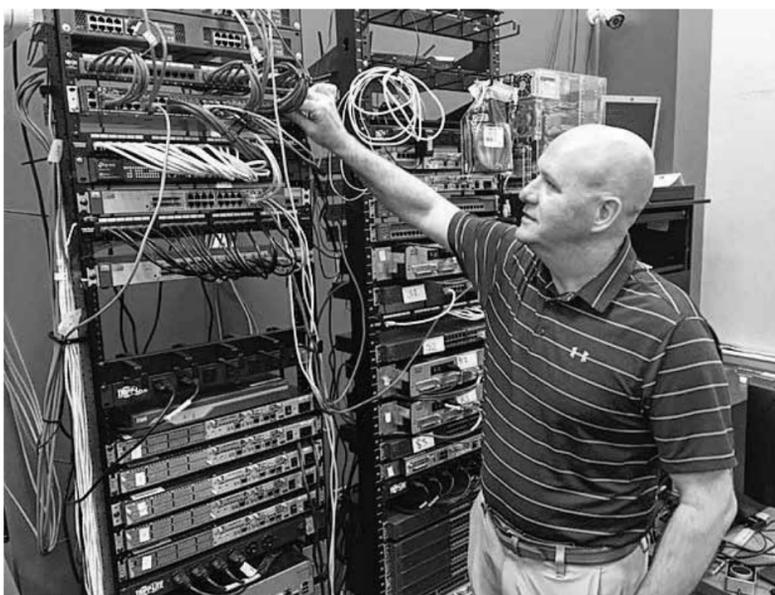
one semester.

The Night IT Academy is the first of its kind for the College. A variety of conversations with local industry and current instructors allowed the College to narrow down distinctive certifications that are in demand in Sampson County. The Night IT Academy is designed to teach the student just stepping into the Information Technology world all the way to the working professional seeking to gain additional certifications to remain relevant to their current employment. The classes include Windows Operating Systems and Networking Fundamentals, VM Ware, Palo Alto Networks, and Cisco Certified Networking courses. Each class is only eight weeks.

With each new academy or institute created in the coming year, our mission will not change. Simply put, we will continue to put the student and the industry

at the heart of what we do each day. We will continue to work to build the accreditation opportunities through consistent instructor trainings such as partnerships with the National Center for Construction Education and Research, the NC Office of State Fire Marshall, NC Department of Motor Vehicles, to name a few. We will continue to view the distinct training needs requested by local industries as a necessary element to keeping Sampson's economy strong and thriving. Lastly, we will work to never miss the student's perspective when considering class schedules and class tuition and fees. It our privilege to offer Sampson County our distinctive services as we move forward into 2019.

Amanda Bradshaw is the dean of continuing education at Sampson Community College.



File photo

Sampson Community College now has cyber defense training in the IT Academy.



File photo

Sampson Community College now has forklift certification training.

Keeping the fun in fitness at TCHW



By Robin Palmer

Sampson Regional Medical Center

It is all about having fun, right? If you aren't enjoying yourself, you are less likely to stick with something. This is so important when we are talking about leading a healthy lifestyle – whether we are talking about which physical activity we choose to do or which green we put on our plate. The key is that we choose something! When we eat healthier and move more consistently over time, we help move ourselves closer toward a healthier lifestyle and farther away from obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stress and some cancers. Exercise is Medicine! Food is medicine! These sayings are true.

Our goal at The Center for Health + Wellness (TCHW) is to help you find some type of physical activity that you like so you can sustain it over time. Our goal is to keep it fun and there is plenty to do for members and non-members alike. Did you know that we are hosting community Dodgeball games? Our first series is mid-February and the games are free to members and non-members alike. Round up three of your buddies, give us a call to register and come practice the five D's – Dodge, Duck, Dip, Dive and Dodge a little more!

There is plenty of energy and excitement in TCHW group fitness with the addition of LES MILLS program-

ming. LES MILLS offers a wide range of workouts and group fitness classes for all abilities – from weight training to High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) to cycling and more – offered live and virtual. BODYPUMP, offered live at TCHW, is a simple, athletic-based barbell workout for anyone looking to get lean, toned and fit – fast. Using light to moderate weights with lots of repetition, BODYPUMP gives you a total body workout. And TCHW is offering a free class pass to anyone interested in trying one of these great and effective BODYPUMP classes.

LES MILLS Virtual takes all the things you like most about live classes – inspiring people, great moves, proven results – and translates them into an epic big screen environment. These revolutionary fitness classes offer a total body workout that fits your schedule. From a yoga/Pilates style BODYFLOW to Body Combat, to a GRIT cardio workout, group fitness fun is available all day long.

Also, there are many options available for non-members. Did you realize that there are free community fitness offerings at TCHW every single week day? You can walk for free on TCHW indoor track! Morning, noon and night! Come strut your stuff with a buddy or all by yourself!

Walk-n-Talk is offered:

- Monday thru Friday – 6:30-7:30 a.m.
- Monday thru Friday – 12-1 p.m.
- Wednesday, Thursday, Friday – 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Along with free walking, we provide free community fitness classes:

- Falls Prevention – offered Mondays, 11:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. These are important skills to practice and know.
- Sit and Be Fit – offered Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:15-11:45 a.m.. Strengthen your body without having to stand.
- Tai Chi – offered Wednesdays and

Fridays, 11:30 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Soothe your mind and strengthen your body. Movements are smooth, gentle, loose and naturally brisk.

• Line Dancing – offered Mondays, 7:30-8:30 p.m. This is a free class; however, donations are gladly accepted for SampsonRMC Foundation.

Exercise is key to leading a healthier lifestyle and we are here to help you find your way. With membership, we offer a special program, SPARC, specifically designed to help keep you on track to meet your fitness goals and is free to all new members. With SPARC, our fitness specialist will assist you in achieving your fitness goals by completing a fitness assessment and orientation.

During the assessment they will check your blood pressure, measure your body fat, test your strength, flexibility and aerobic fitness. After finding out your current level of fitness and your goals, an exercise program will be designed specific to your needs. Each week your Fitness Coach will provide you with a different exercise program to challenge you and help you to meet your goals. After completing the 5-week program you will be rewarded with a prize, and if you would like to continue with the program you have the opportunity to receive additional perks.

Fitness is important for the whole family. For members, we offer designated family time so you can bring your kids in to swim in the pool. To introduce the fun in fitness, we offer Kid Fit in the gym and Splash Fit in the pool. Fitness is important for all ages and we want to help keep your kids moving. There will be specialty day camps offered this summer and a swim team and swim lessons are offered year around.

Adding physical activity is key but only one of the components of a healthy lifestyle. TCHW and Sampson-RMC have created Journey to Health,

which offers the tools to make real and lasting lifestyle changes. This program was created in response to the growing problem of obesity in our community. Obesity has emerged as a priority in chronic disease prevention as it increases the likelihood of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and stroke. In the most recent Sampson Regional Medical Center (SampsonRMC) Community Health Needs Assessment, it was noted that almost 75 percent of Sampson County citizens are either overweight or obese.

Journey to Health helps promote the North Carolina guidelines to address obesity, which include the Eat Smart, Move More NC initiative. Eat Smart, Move More NC promotes these evidence-based, individual health behaviors to help reduce obesity:

- Move More - increase physical activity
 - Eat More Fruits and Vegetables
 - Eat More at Home
 - Right-size Your Portions
 - Drink More Water and Less Sugar-Sweetened Beverages
 - Watch Less TV/Reduce Screen Time
- These basic behaviors, as well as goal-setting and action planning, are covered in the free 8-week Journey to Health program. The goal is to help people make healthier choices with eating and physical activity, which will lead to a healthier weight. The next session of Journey to Health will be held April 10 thru May 29, please call us to register.

For more information about any of our programs and to register for Journey to Health, please contact Robin Palmer, SampsonRMC Community Wellness Coordinator at 596-5406 or rpalmer@sampsonrhc.org.

Robin Palmer is the community wellness coordinator for Sampson Regional Medical Center.

A little goes a long way with bone health



Photo courtesy of LesMills

The BODYPUMP class at the Center for Health and Wellness increases the bone density.

By Sophie Collett
Fit Planet

A recent study by Les Mills and Pennsylvania State University found that low weight, high repetition resistance training will increase your bone density.

Study participants completed two to three BODYPUMP classes per week. The result? They all experienced up to eight percent bone mineral density increases in their

legs, pelvis, arms, and spine.

That's a good thing. You may not know it but having a high bone density level is paramount to good health – especially as you age. Once you hit 40 your bone mineral density declines at an accelerated rate.

Head of Research at Les Mills, Bryce Hastings says these findings have turned an old theory on its head. "It's often thought the heavier

the weight you lift, the more benefit you get from it but that's not always true. Lifting very heavy weights has always presented barriers for older and untrained adults as sometimes this type of intensity can be outside the realm of their physical capabilities. That's why using lighter weights is so good – because everyone can do it no matter their age or experience."

The study also found outstand-

ing results for those with osteopenia – a condition caused by low bone density. These individuals experience significant bone mineral density increases of up to 29 percent.

Age is no barrier when it comes to increasing bone density. You may not always be able to see the results, but benefits will prove their worth well in the future as those with strong bones are less likely to break them from falls later in life.

When it comes to the benefits of BODYPUMP building bone strength is just the tip of the iceberg. Using light to moderate weights with lots of repetition, BODYPUMP gives you a total body workout. Instructors coach you through the scientifically-proven moves and techniques pumping out encouragement, motivation, and great music – helping you achieve much more than on your own. You leave the class feeling challenged and motivated, ready to come back for more.

The full study titled, "Low Load, High Repetition Resistance Training Program Increases Bone Mineral Density In Untrained Adults," was published in The Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness.

This piece originally appeared on lesmills.com.

Boosting the quality of life in Clinton



By Lew Starling
Mayor of Clinton

As 2019 gets into full swing, we have so much to be excited about.

As a city, in the last year, we have made substantial investments in our community's future quality of life. Infrastructure is one of our core functions and I am proud to report an upgrade and expansion to our water plant will assure clean and plentiful water for current and future generations. We continue investing in recreation facilities. We have completed a large improvement project at Royal Lane Park, offering our citizens affordable recreational opportunities close to

home while also providing facilities which draw visitors to the city. Also, we have made and will continue making improvements to the Fisher Drive Park. Sidewalks now line Sunset Avenue affording opportunities for exercise and connecting neighborhoods and businesses.

Public safety, another core function, continues to be a priority for city leaders. Our nationally accredited police department remains committed to fair and effective police work, paired with community outreach to build relationships with all members of the community. I am glad to report, crime in our community has reduced from the previous year. Clinton Fire Department, Sampson County's only full-time paid department, continues to provide around the clock professional fire services to protect the lives and property of our citizens.

Investing in water and sewer infrastructure is just one part of the effort. The city continues encouraging economic opportunities. While many communities are losing jobs and population or feel lucky to just hold the line, Clinton continues to see industrial, commercial, and residential growth. We continue to see growth in our housing stock and look for ways to build strong neighborhoods.

Our Clinton Main Street Program keeps adding to a vibrant Downtown



One of the billboards on Interstate 40, featuring the millstone public art, that advertises the City of Clinton.

Clinton. Billboards are up along NC Hwy 24 and Interstate 40 to share our brand and invite visitors to our community. Several public art and beautification projects have come to being and businesses continue moving in to downtown Clinton increasing its profile as a hub for retail, service, and dining. City staff are available to work with developers and citizens alike as continued investment occurs within and around Clinton. Working with business and industry leaders, the city adopted an Economic Development Plan in 2018, showing our commitment to moving Clinton forward by growing our existing businesses and continuing to attract new investment to our community.

The City remains committed to transparency and sound stewardship with our citizen's money. For the ninth straight year, the city was awarded the Government Finance Officers Association's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award recognizing our commitment to best budgetary practices.

All this was accomplished amidst Hurricane Florence. Florence was the wettest hurricane to ever hit the Carolinas with damages reaching 17 billion dollars in North Carolina alone. Like any hardship, Florence provided

the opportunity for our community to shine. City workers responded, providing essential services during the storm and working long after the last rain drop fell to return our community to normal. Citizens stepped up to check on their neighbors, provided comfort and supplies to those in the most need, and helped care for emergency responders and recovery workers who flocked to eastern North Carolina from around the country.

Civic engagement is more important than ever. Diversity is one of our community's many strengths and that includes, diversity of opinion. The city is here to serve you, the citizen, and we are always exploring new opportunities for all citizens to participate.

As Mayor, I want your continued input as we make decisions on behalf of our community. I invite you to join us at a city council meeting on the first Tuesday of each month or at one of our district meetings. Annually, around March and April, city council members and senior city staff host district meetings in neighborhoods across the city and I encourage everyone to come learn about the city and share ideas or concerns. I look forward to working together in 2019 towards a better Clinton and better Sampson County.



The entryway to the Go Bark Park, located on Fisher Drive. It marked its grand opening in October 2017.

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Local support helps college grow



By Dr. Bill Starling
Sampson Community College

City and Sampson County Schools now allow over 500 junior and senior upperclassmen to enroll in tuition-free courses. Over 200 Early College High School students attend full-time on the campus and continue the school's tradition as an academically high performing school. We continue to work with our secondary partners to expand these opportunities to include more students interested in occupational programs.

As part of the growing concern about the shortage of skilled labor, the North Carolina General Assembly has provided additional funding to the state's community colleges to better support the development of short-term training certification and licensing programs. And while the College continues to enroll more students seeking transfer, our staff and faculty work to expand courses in occupational extension. While truck driver training is the college's most recognized of these offerings, we have recently added an IT Academy at accessible times.

The campus continues to benefit from continuing investment. We are excited about the construction of the new welding building and our ongoing efforts to develop a truck driver training site in the Industrial Park. We continue to work with all our business



Students work to make their own computers at Sampson Community College. Courtesy photo

partners as we leverage private and federal funds to augment state and local funding. EDA funding of \$1.6 million has allowed the NCCConnect Bond funds to now be directed to the effort to build the truck driving site.

We continue to benefit from the generous support of the SCC Foundation and the advocacy our Foundation directors provide for the College's mission.

Using both College and Foundation funds, SCC will offer the first Sampson Promise to our county high school students this year ensuring that students will have ac-

cess to financial support for up to two years of occupational or transfer study at SCC.

The Foundation's support of the construction of walking and athletic spaces as part of the first phase of Develop the East will enable the campus to better support student activities and extend these resources to our community partners.

We continue to be reminded that the college can best achieve its mission through united efforts.

Dr. Bill Starling is the president of Sampson Community College.

Sampson Community College was founded in 1967. First as STI, then STC, now SCC...the institution has continued to evolve to meet the changing demands of students and employers. The institution I began serving in the 1970s is almost unrecognizable today. Beginning with courses delivered on the quarter system and transfer courses contracted through UNC-W, SCC now serves students both through traditional classes and increasingly through distance learning classes that remove the barriers of place and time to attendance.

SCC's partnerships with the Clinton



Courtesy photo

Dr. Tonita Smith counsels a new student about degree options at Sampson Community College.



Courtesy photo

Phase 1 of the Develop the East project includes the construction of a multi-purpose field and walking track.



Associated Urologists of North Carolina, PA

Dr. Frank Tortora



Dr. Kevin Khoudary



Dr. Kevin Perry



Dr. William Kizer



The Board Certified Urologists of AUNC represent Decades of commitment to Urologic Care.

As one of the largest urology specialty groups in North Carolina, AUNC has offered exceptional and innovative urologic care to the residents of Sampson County and its surrounding areas for over 13 years. Currently AUNC has convenient offices in Clinton, Dunn, & Clayton as well as five other locations in the Wake County area.

We offer expertise across all areas of Adult & Pediatric urology including:

Women's Health

- Stress Incontinence / Urinary Incontinence
- Urinary Tract Infections
- Cystocele (Dropped Bladder)
- Hematuria
- Kidney Stones
- Interstitial Cystitis
- Vaginal Vault Prolapse
- Neurogenic Bladder /Voiding Difficulty
- Bladder Cancer Screening and Treatment



Men's Health

- Prostate Cancer Screening and Treatment
- Testicular Cancer
- Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia
- Prostatitis
- Erectile Dysfunction
- Kidney Stones
- Vasectomies
- Bladder Cancer Screening and Treatment
- Male Infertility / Vasectomy Reversal

We Specialize in Minimally Invasive Robotic Surgery

Apex (919) 758-8677	Brier Creek (919) 758-8677	Cary (919) 467-3203	Clayton (919) 467-3203	Clinton (910) 592-7129	Dunn (910) 892-1068	Raleigh (919) 758-8677	Wake Forest (919) 554-8539
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