



# Employee Newsletter

APRIL 2018

Happy Easter!!!



## APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Jerry Clark	4
Theresa Creasman	4
Barry Ellis	4
Randy Phillips	5
Denise Cross	7
Mike Rutan	7
Jr. Chastain	11
Ricky Lancaster	11
Michelle Mitchell	12
Cody Williams	15
Bobby Deese	17
Lucky Jenkins	17
Kenton Ebersohl	18
Brandon Walls	18
Jacob Kitchens	19
Doug Vuick	19
Joshua Nichols	20
Jared Coleman	21
Ashley Jones	22
Renee McLean	24
Carmen Edwards	25
Tiffany Enloe	25
Malissa Reel	26
Ages 25 to 72	

## OPEN ENROLLMENT

It's that time again! Open enrollment will be on May 16th in the upstairs Courtroom (the old Courtroom) in the Court House. This is the only time of the year you may make changes to your medical, dental, cancer, vision, accident and Liberty pre-tax life insurance policies without having a qualifying event (death, birth, marriage, divorce, loss of other coverage, etc.). If you are unable to attend on the 17th, I have scheduled a make-up day on May 24th this year.

This is a mandatory meeting for all full-time employees. There will be representatives there from Crescent, AFLAC, The Hartford, Liberty National, 401(k), Community Eye Care, Sam's Club and the Credit Union. There will be four sessions during the day and a schedule will be distributed sometime late in April or early in May. Mark the date and I'll see you there.

If you are currently enrolled in the FLEXIBLE spending plan, ***you MUST RE-ENROLL*** to be a member for the 2017-18 plan year. **This is the only benefit that requires you to enroll every year in order to maintain your benefit.** We currently have over 50 employees who are taking advantage of this option. If you have known health, dental, vision or other qualified expenses, you are basically throwing money away if you aren't taking advantage of the Flex plan. It's convenient, easy to use and the only benefit that you for sure get back more than you put into it (if you spend all your allotment). The Flex plan can be used to pay for qualified medical, dental, and vision expenses for you, your spouse and any dependent children—even if you don't cover them on the County insurance plan, plus you are now allowed to carry over \$500 to the next year if you don't use all your funds. Find somebody who is participating and ask them if they like the Flex plan—I think you'll find that most everybody who is participating enjoys the convenience and savings it provides.

CONGRATULATIONS TO JOHN BOGGS WHO IS RETIRING FROM EMS AFTER WORKING FOR ALMOST 25 YEARS WITH THE COUNTY!!!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR YEARS OF SERVICE AND BEST OF LUCK TO YOU IN YOUR RETIREMENT!

## DISABILITY CLAIMS

There are new ERISA guidelines for the processing of disability claims that go into effect on April 1st. Information about the new guidelines are posted on the County's website, on the employee information page, under insurance and privacy. Please check it out there. On that page you may also find copies of the County's health and dental insurance plan, as well as a copy of our life and disability policies with The Hartford.

## NEW FEDERAL TAX FORM & IRS WITHHOLDING CALCULATOR

The 2018 Federal Tax withholding form is available online now on the County website under employee information. Also, if you have not done so already, there is an IRS calculator you can use to estimate if you are having enough federal tax withheld from your paycheck. It can be found at <https://apps.irs.gov/app/withholdingcalculator/>. The tax laws that are in place now are quite different from the ones we filed under for the 2017 tax year and I think it would be wise to use the calculator to make sure you are having the correct amounts withheld each pay period. You may change your federal or state tax withholdings at any time. The state withholding form may also be found on the County's website under employee information.

Q: What happened when the Easter bunny caught his ears in the fan?

A: It took ears off his life!

Q: Why did the little girl cry when she lost the race?

A: Because an egg beater!

Q: Why are Tree Huggers bad at playing cards?

A: They like to avoid the flush.

Q: What did Obi Wan Kenobi say to the tree?

A: May the Forest be with you.

Q: Why did the leaf go to the doctor?

A: It was feeling green.

## Commissioners Board Meetings

April 2, 6:30 PM

April 23, 6:30 PM

Is there something you would like to see in the newsletter? Please email Melody at [melody.johnson@cherokeecounty-nc.gov](mailto:melody.johnson@cherokeecounty-nc.gov) with any suggestions.

## SPOTLIGHT ON EMPLOYEES



The health department would like to recognize two of its employees on recent accomplishments. Mary Jo Blakely, who is the Care Coordination 4 Children (CC4C) program coordinator, has done such an excellent job with patient engagement and retention that State Consultants are using her as an example when providing other agencies with advice on program management. Ms. Blakely's patient contacts and engagement in the program is currently surpassing the State average percentage. Mary Jo's pride in her work demonstrates the strong desire she has to help families and children of Cherokee County

Deborah Palmer is the coordinator for the Child Health and Maternal Health programs. Mrs. Palmer has recently completed an intense training program with the State and has become a Child Health Enhanced Role Registered Nurse. This will allow Mrs. Palmer to perform and bill for well-child exams. Mrs. Palmer has also expressed an interest in performing Post-partum and Newborn home visits and has transformed her vision into the development of this program. Thanks to Deborah's efforts we will see the Child Health program being more successful and our community a healthier one.

Another of our County employees has also reached new heights. Brian Dillon, our Code Enforcement supervisor, is the first Cherokee County code enforcement inspector to ever have achieved level III certification in all four of the building trades (mechanical, electrical, plumbing and building) as well as in fire inspecting. This is an accomplishment very few across the state have ever attained. This will allow Brian to inspect those constructions that we formerly had to pay someone else to inspect. Not only that, but Brian also recently successfully completed the process and exam to become a Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM®). This allows Mr. Dillon to manage the floodplain management for the County—something else we had been contracting out.

CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU TO THESE THREE EMPLOYEES!!!

## Kid's Fishing Rodeo

Hosted by Cherokee County Sheriff's Office

**Date: Saturday, April 7**

**Time: 9am till the fish stop biting**

**Place: Sheriff's Office Firing Range  
9554 US 19, Marble NC 28905**



**Join us for Fishing, Food and Fun!**

**FREE BAIT!! BRING YOUR POLE!!**

**HOTDOG PLATES!! KIDS EAT FREE!!**

(Proceeds from hotdog plate sales to benefit Fraternal Order of Police)

***Event is for children, middle school and younger- NO adult fishing will be allowed at this event!***

# Tornado Safety

## (Adapted from FEMA)

Do you live in a place where tornadoes happen frequently? (A special map of the United States may help you answer this question.) If you are in an area where tornadoes happen, make sure you know how to stay safe!

### **If you are at home during a tornado:**

- Go to a windowless interior room on lowest level of your house. Go to a storm cellar or basement if your house has one. If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway or a smaller inner room without windows, such as a bathroom or closet.
- Get away from the windows.
- Go to the center of the room. Stay away from corners because they tend to attract debris.
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table or desk and hold on to it.
- Use your arms to protect head and neck.
- If you are in a mobile home, get out and find shelter elsewhere.

### **If you are at work or school during a tornado:**

- Go to the basement or to an inside hallway at the lowest level.
- Avoid places with wide-span roofs such as auditoriums, cafeterias, large hallways, or shopping malls.
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table or desk and hold on to it.
- Use your arms to protect head and neck.

### **If you are outdoors during a tornado:**

- If possible, get inside a building.
- If shelter is not available or there is no time to get indoors, lie in a ditch or low-lying area or crouch near a strong building. Look out for flood waters which may also fill low areas.
- Use your arms to protect head and neck.

### **If you are in a car during a tornado:**

- Never try to drive faster than a tornado in a car or truck. Tornadoes can change direction quickly and can lift up a car or truck and toss it through the air.
- Get out of the car immediately and take shelter in a nearby building.
- If there is no time to get indoors, get out of the car and lie in a ditch or low-lying area away from the vehicle. Be aware of the potential for flooding.

# Highlight of County Benefits



This article is for those of you who aren't sure what benefits the County provides to you. I am always a little surprised that folks don't know what their benefits are, so below you will see the benefits the County offers, as well as contact information for the various providers and agents.

## **Full Time Benefits**

- County paid Retirement match (currently 7.61% of gross wages for general employees, 8.25% for law enforcement, will be 7.85 or 7.86% July 1 for general and 8.5% for law enforcement—rates updated annually by the retirement system). Employee contributes 6% of gross pay. Contact # for retirement system (877) 627-3287
- County paid health insurance for employee only—plan year July to June (employee paid offered for spouse and children) Contact # for Crescent Health Solutions who administers our claims (800) 707-7726
- County paid dental insurance for employee only—plan year July to June and employee may choose provider of choice for dental (employee paid offered for spouse and children) Contact # for Crescent Health Solutions who administers our claims (800) 707-7726
- County paid Telemedicine benefit available to employee and anyone in employee's household—provided through AllyHealth, contact # (888) 565-3303
- County paid FICA match (6.2% paid by county). Employee pays 6.2% on wages up to \$127,200.
- County paid Medicare match (1.45% paid by county). Employee pays 1.45% of total gross wages.
- County paid 401(k) match for Law Enforcement officers—administered by Prudential—county pays 5% of gross pay to 401(k) for each employee who is in a sworn law enforcement position. Contact # for Prudential (866) 427-3287
- County paid worker's compensation insurance—amount varies by employee job class.
- County paid cell phones for those employees whose jobs require them to be accessible by phone.
- Life insurance —\$15,000 county-paid employee only policy (reduced after age 65) through The Hartford (employee may purchase additional life insurance for self, spouse and/or children, as well as short term disability (STD) and long term disability (LTD). In addition to The Hartford, Liberty National offers a different type of life insurance for employee, spouse and children that is employee paid. Contact # for The Hartford (800) 549-6514 for disability claims, (888) 563-1124 for life claims. Contact # for Liberty National (828) 557-3533—Kenny West, agent
- Vision insurance—offered by Community Eye Care—plan year July to June—employee paid benefit. Contact # (888) 254-4290
- Cancer insurance—offered by AFLAC—employee paid benefit. Contact # (828) 342-1993, Josh Fields, agent
- Accident insurance—offered by AFLAC—employee paid benefit Contact # (828) 342-1993, Josh Fields, agent
- Critical Illness insurance—offered by AFLAC—employee paid benefit Contact # (828) 342-1993, Josh Fields, agent
- Critical Incident insurance—offered by AFLAC—employee paid benefit (covers only certain health incidents) Contact # (828) 342-1993, Josh Fields, agent
- Optional 401(k)—administered by Prudential—employee paid pre-tax or Roth options. Employee may contribute up to IRS defined limits. You may enroll in this benefit at any time. Prudential contact # (866) 427-3287
- Optional 457 contributions—administered by VALIC—employee paid pre-tax contributions. Employee may contribute up to IRS defined limits. You may enroll in this benefit at any time. Contact John Richardson, VALIC agent, at (828) 452-9580 to enroll.
- Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)—employee paid—may only enroll in this benefit at open enrollment and may contribute up to a maximum of \$2600 on a pre-tax basis for plan year beginning July 1, 2017 (will be \$2650 for 18-19). This is one of the best benefits we offer for folks who have known medical and dental expenses. Can also be used to pay medical and dental for spouse and dependent children, regardless of whether they are on the County's medical and dental.
- Paid Holidays—12 days per calendar year and we follow the State holiday schedule
- Paid leave—12 days paid sick leave per year (may be used for sick for employee and immediate family members and for funeral leave—may never be used in lieu of vacation) plus two weeks to four weeks paid vacation leave per year depending on years of service (may be used for any reason and may be used in lieu of sick if not enough sick leave is available)

## **Part-Time Benefits**

- County paid Retirement match for employees who are scheduled to work at least 20 hours per week on a regular basis—currently 7.61% of gross wages for general and part-time LEO employees, (will be 7.85 or 7.86% July 1)—rates updated annually by the retirement system). Employee contributes 6% of gross pay.
- Holiday pay for holidays actually worked—time and a half up to 8 hours maximum holiday pay. Hours worked are paid at regular rate. Divide hours by two and place in holiday column on time sheet which equals time and a half.
- Optional 401(k)—available to part-time employees who contribute to the retirement system—see provider and contact information above