



Edgecombe County Employee Newsletter

January 2006

From the County Manager

Important Dates

- ◆ Commissioners Meeting
Feb 6th @ 7:00 PM

Quote of the Month

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Interesting Facts

Elephants are the only animals that can't jump.

There are more English speaking people in China than in the US.

An impala (small, deer-like animal) can leap spans of 30 feet, but will not jump if it can not see where it will land. They are often kept in zoos with only 4 feet high fences.

Brain Teasers

What object has keys that open no locks, space but no room, and you can enter but not go in?

What is once in a minute, twice in a moment, and never in a thousand years?

The answers are posted on our website
www.edgecombecountync.gov

Garnishment for unpaid taxes will begin Feb 1st and will be evident in your Feb paycheck !!

Its tough to understand the phrase "a penny saved is a penny earned" until you are down to counting pennies. The last few years have been tough financial times for the County and we have had to do some penny-pinching. Ever-increasing cost of Medicaid, which accounts for 21 cents on our 93 cent tax rate, costs related to Hurricane Floyd, the state withholding sales tax revenue, and sky rocketing cost of health care created financial challenges

to say the least. Nevertheless, we have seen where a penny saved is truly a penny earned. You have made sacrifices and saved where you could, and it is paying off. That coupled with aggressive tax collection has put us in a much better financial position. Certainly there is no time for celebration yet, because we still face many challenges. But if we continue to work smart, we are looking at a strong possibility of another cost of living increase. Final budget projec-

tions for the remainder of this fiscal year will be a key determining factor on a pay raise. So keep on saving, making purchases only when absolutely necessary, being as efficient as possible so that we don't have to hire additional personnel, and going after grants whenever available. Help us save a penny, and you just might earn a few.



Lorenzo Carmon

Featured Department/Agency Maintenance

If you want to talk about the yeast that makes the cake rise, then you need to talk about the Maintenance Department. Jimmy Price and his staff of 13 provide services to us that often go unnoticed, and unfortunately unappreciated. Can you imagine if they stopped doing what they do. What if they didn't pick up the trash, vacuum the floors, clean the bathrooms, sort and deliver the mail, set up for meetings, clean light fixtures, dust furniture, move furniture, inventory, order & distribute supplies, clean the grounds, and shovel snow and ice off the walkways (to name a few). What a jam we would be in. And heaven forbid, they don't make it to

your office to hang that picture within 5 minutes of you calling. Think about it; just in the County Administration building there are about 25 bathrooms. They have about 10 separate facilities to manage. They are the first in and the last to leave to unlock and lock up the buildings. In addition to these more janitorial duties, their maintenance responsibilities include maintaining heating/air and electrical services, plumbing, general repairs, overseeing renovations, even running computer cable. A couple of maintenance staff even drive the tow truck to pick-up junk vehicles. They also play a

key role in disaster response and the emergency operations center. Beyond the obvious things they do, they are always the "go-to" people. They all help with everything and are so dependable that we rely on them for so many things. They all are such great people. We appreciate what they do and enjoy having them around so much.

We say thank you to Jimmy and your staff. Your work is so valuable and we

hope we never have to find out what it is like without you.

Thank you so much.



A Journey to Brazil

submitted by Art Bradley, Cooperative Extension

Art Bradley, Extension Agent for Cooperative Extension, was selected to go to Brazil. Here is Art's account of his trip.

I was one of 14 Extension Agents from NC Cooperative Extension selected to attend the international tobacco researcher's conference, CORESTA, and tour the heart of Brazil's tobacco production. Brazil is now the leader in the production of flue-cured tobacco for export; a title the US held until the early 90's. Brazil now grows four times more tobacco than the US and exports 60%. It is an interesting country with an odd mix of using oxen-powered cultivators and complete de-

pendence upon hand labor while utilizing the latest technology in curing controls, crop protection agents, and enjoying satellite TV. Farms average around 40 acres in size and the average grower has 7 acres of tobacco. The farm size is similar to our farming operations in the 50's and 60's.

Tobacco was the only crop of economic importance in the region of Brazil we visited and practically all of the suitable land was devoted to the crop. This is far different from Edgecombe County where crop rotations are a critical component of disease control, and crop diversity is important in financial risk man-

agement. One aspect of Brazilian tobacco production that US growers can look for in the post-buyout world is more involvement by the tobacco company in the product they purchase. The US may actually regain some tobacco production because of poor Brazilian crops over the past two years. Tobacco continued to provide approximately \$12.5 million dollars in gross farm income last year in Edgecombe County.



STAFF NEWS

- ◆ Congratulations to Edna Proctor & Shirley Whitehurst (Health Department) on retirement. We wish you the best.
- ◆ The deadline for submitting applications for the LGFCU scholarship award program is February 28, 2006. Employees interested in submitting application may obtain further information at www.plan.lgfcu.org and click Institute of Government scholarship program.
- ◆ Be sure to do a backup on your computer periodically. That way if it crashes, you will have your important files. Call Information Resources at 5-7838 if you need help.

3 Keys to Financial Stability

These may seem elementary or common sense (which they are), but you will be surprised to how few people do them, and how well they work for those who do.

1. **Pay yourself first:** Save on a regular basis no matter how little it is starting off. Pay it like a bill before you pay all your other bills, and then...***DON'T TOUCH IT!!***
2. **Track Your Spending:** You can't make changes to your spending habits if you don't know what they are. Write down how you spend your money for a week (preferably a month). You'll be stunned and maybe even ashamed of how you waste money on little things that add up.
3. **Create a budget & stick to it:** Write goals on how you will spend your money. Be sure to cover even small things like lunch .

Tricks of the Trade - Tips for Improving Work Performance

Need some more resolutions to add to your list for this new year? Here are some that might make you a better employee and better coworker:



- ◆ **Stop whining** - fix it, move it, ignore it, or destroy it, but whatever it is, stop whining. You're stressing yourself and annoying everyone else.
- ◆ **Become the Expert** - Learn as much as you can about your job. Acquire the skills you need to perform it better than the average employee in your

department. Make it hard for your office to function without you (and not because you hide the files whenever you're gone). Remember, the expert is usually the last to be let go.

- ◆ **Take inventory** - where are you compared to last year this time? Still having the same problems? Better with your clients? Still haven't taken that computer class you know will help you? Pick a couple areas you can improve, and take steps to do it.
- ◆ **Give people your attention** - Don't look around the room when someone is talking to you. Pay attention to

them. They deserve it, and you would want the same. Plus, there is always something to be learned from everyone.

- ◆ **Be Polite** - Say things like "thank you" and "you're welcome" whenever appropriate. This may seem old-fashioned, but you will be surprised how far it will get you.
- ◆ **Don't always try to one-up everybody** - Let your coworkers shine sometimes. Otherwise you create enemies and work will always be a foot race, and who has the energy for that.