



# Employee Newsletter

## December 2016

### Have a Blessed Holiday



#### **DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

Grace Blanton	1
Kamie Friedrich	1
Anthony Mariano	1
Sara Wilson	4
David Fairlie	5
Derrick Moody	5
Jeremy Bresch	6
Judy Jackson	6
Scottie Queen	7
Sharon Moss	8
Carolynn Davis	9
Margaret Smith	9
Cathy Hurt	12
Bebeie McClure	12
Heath Woodard	12
Sheri Goodlet	13
Greg Shields	13
Shereen Bates	15
Steve Baumgartner	15
Kala Headley	18
Cory Siebert	20
Karen Wright	21
Kathy Adams	22
Bobby Blair	22
Wanda Stalcup	23
Jimmy Farmer	26
Todd White	26
Eddie Allen	28
Sue Chastain	29
Harold Chastain	30

Ages 25 to 79

#### **Commissioner Board**

#### **Meetings**

**Dec 5 @ 6:30 pm**  
**Dec 19 @ 6:30 pm**

#### **PLEASE CHECK YOUR INFORMATION!!**

When you receive your direct deposit notice or pay check next pay day, please check to make sure your name is spelled correctly and that your mailing address is correct. If it is not, please let me know as soon as possible so I can get corrections made before the end of the year. We only have three more pay periods before it will be time to do W2s for 2016. They will be emailed to those who have given permission to email those. It most likely may be near the end of January before W2s are issued as I have to wait on disability reports from Lincoln Financial before I can print the W2s, plus this year we have the added task of issuing Affordable Care Act forms to anyone who was eligible for health insurance last year.

Also, please go to MUNIS Self Service and check to make sure your personal information is correct. If you have never logged in, you go to the county website, click departments, employee information, and then click Munis Self Service Your user name is first initial, last name, last four of social (ex. jdoexxxx). The password, if you have never logged in before, is the last four of your social and must be changed. If your phone number is incorrect please correct it or if you have a cell number to add, please do so. And if you don't have anybody listed under emergency contact please enter the person who should be contacted if something were to happen to you. You can also look at your pay information, your tax information, retrieve prior year W2s, run a pay simulator and see lots of documents on this site. Please take advantage of this resource—you can find almost any kind of payroll or benefit form there. Forms are found by clicking the word "resources" below your name in the upper right hand corner.

***Congratulations to Hoyt Ledford in Maintenance who is retiring January 1st after a little over 15 years of service.***

***Also, congratulations to Steve Baumgartner who is retiring January 1st after 15 3/4 years with the County in Fire Inspections.***

***We wish both of you the best as you enter this new phase of your lives!!!!***

Due to increasing criticism about excessive governmental spending and bloated bureaucratic budgets, we are immediately scaling back to only basic essentials. Therefore effective immediately the light at the end of the tunnel will be turned off until further notice.

#### **INSURANCE DEDUCTIBLE YEAR**

Just a quick reminder—the deductible year for our health, dental and vision insurance runs **July 1 to June 30**—not January to December. Keep that in mind, especially when you are scheduling dental work since there is a \$1000 plan year limit on dental benefits. And **to clarify the \$1000 plan year limit**, the cost of your two free cleanings (no cost to you) counts toward the \$1000 maximum per year. For example, if your dentist charged \$200 for each of your 2 cleanings, that would leave you \$600 additional to spend (\$1000 - \$400) on dental services for that plan year. So if you have scheduled dental work in January thinking it will be covered and you are close to your \$1000 max, you will probably want to re-schedule the work to July if you can wait. Also a reminder that we do not have a dental network. You may use the dental provider of your choice until your \$1000 plan year maximum is exhausted.

## Safe Toys and Gifts Month

### DECEMBER IS SAFE TOYS AND GIFTS MONTH

#### *KEEP YOUR CHILD'S HOLIDAY TOY TIME SAFE!*

Sharp or pointed edges, small removable parts and even pull strings longer than 7 inches can pose a health threat to small children. Do you know what toys are safe for your children?

We're proud to celebrate Safe Toys and Gifts Month along with The National Safe Kids Campaign and the National Safety Council. Take a look at some tips for selecting safe toys for children:

- Consider the child's age, interests and skill level. Look for quality design and construction, and follow age and safety recommendations on labels.
- Use a small parts tester to determine whether small toys may present a choking hazard to children under age 3. Small parts testers can be purchased at toy or baby specialty stores or you can use the cardboard core of a toilet paper roll - if a toy can pass through, it is too small for young children and may cause them to choke if swallowed.
- Avoid toys with sharp points or edges, toys that produce loud noises, and projectiles (such as darts).
- Avoid toys with strings, straps or cords longer than 7 inches that may pose a risk for strangulation for young children.
- Avoid electrical toys with heating elements for children under age 8.
- Avoid cap guns that use caps that can be ignited by the slightest friction and can cause serious burns.



#### **Consider The Facts!**

- Falls and choking cause most toy-related deaths and injuries in children. Choking alone causes one third of all toy-related deaths - most often from balloons.
- Children 4 years old and younger account for almost half of all toy-related injuries and almost all deaths.
- Children younger than age 3 are at the greatest risk of choking because they tend to put objects - especially toys - in their mouths.

Toys can sometimes be recalled for safety reasons. Check the National Safe Kids Campaign website [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org) for updates and information on recent toy recalls.

For additional information about safe toys, visit [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org) > [Choosing Safe Toys](#).

**Remember...the best way to keep your child safe while playing with toys is to BE THERE!**

In addition to several wildfires in western North Carolina, Cherokee County is experiencing a season of severe drought. We are currently categorized as a level D4, being "Exceptional Drought". Some residents are also currently experiencing dry springs and wells. We have listed some resources below that may be helpful. Also, while conditions are not expected to improve tremendously over the next few months, we encourage all residents to take precautionary measures to conserve water resources. Below are a few tips for water conservation:

- \* Stagger showers in your household and shorten shower time
- \* Wash only full loads of laundry and dishes
- \* Limit car washes
- \* Do laundry at a laundry mat
- \* Turn off the water while brushing your teeth or washing your hands
- \* Limit toilet flushes

If your well does go dry contact your local well company immediately, as there may be a waiting time before they will be able to assist you. Below is a link for guidance on water conservation, and a link to apply for a low interest loan on individual wells.

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/drinking/emergency-water-supply-preparation.html>  
[http://sercap.org/se\\_loan\\_fund.htm](http://sercap.org/se_loan_fund.htm)



## *A Focus on Gratitude*

So often, it is so much easier to focus on the things in our lives that we don't like and to fret about the things we don't have or how much we dislike this thing or that thing—and I'll have to admit, I'm very guilty of having that trait. I'm going to assume that I'm not the only one who focuses too much on the negative and not enough on the positive and give us some food for thought about gratitude for the next few months. I was listening to a program on the radio last weekend that discussed the scientific research that has been done on being grateful and about the studies that have been done that show that being grateful can improve so many different things about our lives. This month, I'm copying an idea from Pinterest about ideas for a gratitude journal.

### *25 Gratitude Journal Prompts*

- 1. What made you smile today?*
- 2. What is one thing you love about yourself?*
- 3. Who are you grateful for and why?*
- 4. What accomplishments in your life have brought you the most happiness?*
- 5. What is different today than a year ago that you are grateful for?*
- 6. What do you like about the current season?*
- 7. What is something that one of your family members did today that make you happy?*
- 8. What is something beautiful that you saw today?*
- 9. What made you laugh today?*
- 10. What is something that was hard to do but you did it anyway?*
- 11. What is a favorite family outing you went on this year?*
- 12. What is something you are good at?*
- 13. What gift did you love receiving this year?*
- 14. What is something you love in nature?*
- 15. What is something you love about your parents (alive or dead)?*
- 16. What was the best thing that happened today?*
- 17. What is a favorite family tradition?*
- 18. What kindness did someone give today?*
- 19. What do you like about where you live?*
- 20. What do you love about one or more of your friends?*
- 21. What is a trial or challenge that has strengthened you?*
- 22. What is a special memory about your childhood?*
- 23. What do you like about your job?*
- 24. What spiritual beliefs are you grateful for?*
- 25. What freedoms are you grateful for?*

*This is just a starting list of ideas of things you might be grateful for. You will certainly have ideas of your own to add to the list and some things on the list may not work for you. The important thing is to try to start focusing on the positive aspects of your life—doing so will give the negatives much less power over you and you will be happier and healthier for it, or at least that's what the studies are saying.*

**As we express our gratitude,  
we must never forget that  
the highest appreciation is  
not to utter words, but to  
live by them.**

**John F. Kennedy**

**Sometimes when  
you're in a dark place  
you think you've been  
buried, but actually  
you've been planted.**

It was Christmas and the judge was in a merry mood as he asked the prisoner, "What are you charged with?"  
"Doing my Christmas shopping early", replied the defendant.

"That's no offense", said the judge. "How early were you doing this shopping?"

"Before the store opened."

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Q: What is it called when a snowman has a temper tantrum?

A: A meltdown!

Q: What do snowmen eat for breakfast?

A: Frosted Flakes.

Q: What is a mountains favorite type of candy?

A: Snow caps.

Q: What do you call a snowman with a six pack?

A: An abdominal snowman.

Q: What kind of math do Snowy Owls like?

A: Owlgebra.