



CHAPEL HILL

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**On the
Front
Burner**



Town Manager Maurice Jones

What does spring in Chapel Hill mean to you? This year, more than ever, spring feels like the season of new life and growth. Last year at this time, businesses were shuttered, people were being told to limit trips out of their homes, and we were all starting to get used to this new normal.

This year there's hope in the air, not just pollen.

As temperatures have warmed, the opportunity to get outside has also increased. Outdoor gatherings—especially when people keep their distance—are safer than indoor gatherings. I encourage everyone to enjoy this time of year, connect with the people you haven't seen in person in a long time, and continue to do so safely. If nothing else, get outside and take a walk in the fresh air. It will be good for your mind and your body.

This hopeful feeling is backed by good data as well. COVID-19-positive cases are decreasing, vaccinations are increasing, and vaccine supplies are also increasing.

We continue to plan for the next steps in reopening our facilities. We are focused

on our procedures, an appropriate timeline, facility upgrades, and many more topics to ensure that everyone who returns in person and those who have worked in our facilities and throughout Town during the pandemic are not at risk for exposure. I also stand by our promise to give at least 30 days notice before making major changes that will bring more people into the office.

For now, take time for yourself when you can. Your mental and physical health are extremely important. I am very proud of all the work our Town has done, related to the pandemic and related to normal services. Chapel Hill is a special community, and it is that way because of each one of you.



A new bus wrap honors frontline workers. See p 2 for more.

SHOWING APPRECIATION FOR FRONTLINE WORKERS

To show appreciation to frontline Town employees for their good work during the COVID-19 pandemic, a new bus wrap features frontline workers. Thanks to **Jeffrey Sullivan** (Transit) for coordinating the pictures, design and making this move from idea to reality in short order.

Employees featured are Paul Bell (Police); Taij Bond (Fire); Milo Carranza (Transit); Tony Combs (Transit); Katina Dixon (Transit); David Felton (Library); Katy Fontaine (Transit); Jenna Hambleton (Parks and Rec); Mark Hicks (Parks and Rec); Maureen Looby (Parks and Rec); Reggie Mebane (Transit); Ji Nichol (Library); Paula Oxendine (Transit); Roy Richardson (Housing and Community); Mark Rodgers (Transit); Keith Smith (Public Works); Fred Sparrow (Transit); Eleni Terzis (Fire); Katy Thomas (Public Works); Craig Wortham (Public Works); Demetrice Williams (Parks and Rec); Janice Worth (Transit)



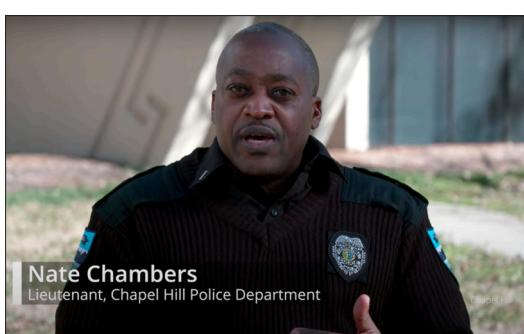
YOU HAVE A SPOT, TAKE YOUR SHOT

Town employees were featured in a PSA from the NC Department of Health and Human Services on COVID-19 vaccines. In the video, **Nate Chambers** and **Lindsay VanMeter** (both Police) explain why it's important for public safety employees to get the vaccine:

Lindsay says, "When we talk about us or officers serving and protecting, how better can we show that we're willing to do that than to get a vaccine to ensure the safety of the community we serve?"

View the video at

youtube.com/watch?v=Ci6ZrvA0MyQ



Briefs



Clark Dickens (Police) and his family welcomed a new arrival, Titus Edward Dickens. Titus was born on April 10,

weighing 8 lbs. 7 oz. and 21 inches long. Mom and baby are healthy and doing well.



Yesenia Mayhew (Public Works) and her husband, Phil, are new parents! They welcomed twin boys, Charles Ruben (top) and Theodore Max (bottom) on January 20. Charlie was 5 lbs., 7 oz., 17.75 inches, and Theo was 4 lbs., 11 oz., and 17.75 inches.



Parents and babies are healthy and doing well!

COMING SOON! WATER QUALITY TRAINING

Starting in May, all Town staff will receive our brand new Stormwater 101 training. In this training, Stormwater staff will teach us about how our jobs are connected to water quality in Town. Whether you work in an office or spend your days doing field work, we all play a part in protecting local water quality.

This mandatory training is part of the Town's water quality permit, called NPDES Phase II. Administered by NC Department of Environmental Quality, the NPDES program is a piece of the federal Clean Water Act.

As staff, we are required to learn about how our work affects the stormwater system and local waterways.

Tammy Morales (HRD) has been promoted to Senior Human Resource Development Consultant (HRD) and will be assigned to Transit. Over the past 10 months Tammy has served as the Interim HRD Partner for Transit. During this time she has become an important part of the Transit Team and immersed herself in learning the nuisances of transit, while also supporting Transit Team Members.



Travis Parker (Transit) has been promoted to Transit Operations Manager. The Operations Manager position is

responsible for the Fixed Route and Demand Response Division. He has been employed with the Town of Chapel Hill since December 2000 and has been serving as the Interim Operations Manager for the past 18 months.



Mark Rodgers (Transit) has been promoted to Assistant Operations Manager—Demand Response. Mark has been employed with

the Town of Chapel Hill since January 2001. Over the last 14 months he has effectively served as the Interim Assistant Operations Manager-Demand Response.

Tim Thorpe (Transit) has been selected to the position of Training Coordinator. He has been employed with the Town of Chapel Hill since November 2016 and during that time served as Assistant Operations Manager-Fixed Route. He is a certified third-party CDL administrator and a certified Smith System Defensive Driving Training. He has demonstrated an ability to connect with Transit Team Members and collaborate to address issues and/or create positive outcomes.



The Employee Assistance Program Is Here to Help

COVID19 has affected everyone in many ways. Some people are experiencing more stress, depression, anxiety, sadness, isolation. If you have any of these feelings and would like someone to talk with about them, call the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) any time at 800-327-2251.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT GENDER

You might be seeing a lot of conversations about gender right now in social media and the news. Before you join in, it's important to know how to talk about this subject without making your coworkers, family and friends feel unsafe or disrespected.

The most important thing to remember is that you might not know as much about the genders of the people around you as you think. It can be really dangerous for some people to openly express their gender identity, so they might not share that with you for their own protection.

If someone does share their gender identity with you, you should never talk openly about it without their explicit permission. Just because someone is 'out' to you, that doesn't mean they're 'out' to everyone.

Next time, we'll talk about the difference between gender and sex. Have questions or ideas for a topic? Email sslayer@townofchapelhill.org.



MORE THAN A DESIGNER

Many people contribute to TOWNTalk, but who gathers the content and edits and lays it out so it's ready for your eyes? I'd love to say I'm surprising her with this column, but she even had to lay out this featurette.

Melanie Miller started working for the Town as a part-time graphic designer in February 2006. Now as a full-time employee, still with the title of Graphic Designer, she has since taken on many roles, including holding the keys to the back end of the Town's main website, townofchapelhill.org.

Particularly through the pandemic, Melanie has helped keep the communication engines running smoothly. Melanie keeps the COVID-19 webpage up to date, creates new graphics when critical messages need to be delivered, and much more, all while maintaining normal duties.

Just recently, **Sabrina Oliver** (CaPA Director) and I were contacted by **John Richardson** (Manager's Office) and **Len Cone** (Transportation Planning) telling us how well recent projects have gone working with Melanie.

"This project is another great example how Melanie's combination of talents and team-oriented character help us

TRY THE NEW TRASH TRACKER

Have you seen trash around town while you're out and about? Chapel Hill Stormwater wants to hear about it using our brand new Trash Tracker form at <https://bit.ly/2Pl0TB4>.

Here's how it works:

1. Find trash;
2. Take pictures;
3. Submit the Trash Tracker form

You can also email sbauer@townofchapelhill.org with the location and a brief description.

Trash in streams doesn't always start at the stream bank. If it is on the ground, chances are that it will end up in our local creeks and then flow down to Jordan Lake. Learn more at townofchapelhill.org/PreventWaterPollution



move forward!" John wrote.

"Your skills are amazing, but you, as a person, should be receiving awards and recognitions ALL OF THE TIME!!!" Len wrote.

I'm sure there are many more who have recently interacted with Melanie in one way or another. On behalf of all who have, thank you, Melanie, for your hard work and continued dedication.

—Ran Northam (CaPA)



Did you know? Melanie recently completed building a harp (from harpkit.com). Ask her about it next time you see her.

Compliments

A Transit EZ Rider customer sent a note of appreciation for this invaluable service when they were injured and unable to drive. "Rides to the grocery store and to medical appointments provided essential transportation assistance when due to COVID 19 rides from family or friends were not possible and taxi service was a financial burden."

Thanks to **Stan Newsome** (Police) for sharing his talent for photography. Stan has taken excellent photos of new employees in the Police Department's crisis unit. Ran Northam (CaPA) says, "It takes a special eye and talent to achieve the "great" photos. Officer Newsome has captured that... This is another example of the great assistance we've received in our communication efforts while we have been short staffed and far from lacking in things to do."

Jayson Staley (Public Works) was thanked by Martin Crompton for assistance with leaf deliveries for a compost operation. "His professionalism and courtesy has been way above the norm, and his communication has been exemplary."

Ernie Rogers (Public Works-Engineering) was commended by Steve Fromme for his diligence in serving the public. Ernie helped him find the source of damage to a drainage pipe when the companies involved would not take responsibility. "Ernie never once complained and kept working until he found the responsible party."

Matthew Rahimzadeh (Transit) was commended for being calm in an emergency. When an object was thrown into his vehicle, he made an emergency stop and cared for a customer who was knocked down until a supervisor arrived. "His calm under pressure went above and beyond the call of duty and because of his actions there was minimal disruption to the schedule for the customers."



Congratulations to the **Transit Demand Response Team** for achieving 513 consecutive days without a preventable accident and crushing the previous record of 400 days. Over the last three years they have had more than 1,185 days without a preventable accident. This is a fantastic accomplishment! This demonstrates a commitment to safety, professionalism, responsibility and training.

The cemetery work crew (Parks and Recreation) was thanked by Martha Rich for keeping the Chapel Hill Memorial Cemetery well-maintained. "Everything always looks so nice."



HOMETOWN HERO

Amy Edwards

presented by



Amy Edwards (Transit) was chosen as a Hometown Hero by Chapelboro.com. She recently retired after a long career with Chapel Hill Transit. Amy drove for 34 years with no preventable accidents. She has driven a little over a million and a half miles in her career—enough to drive around the world 60 times.

Brian Litchfield, Director of Chapel Hill Transit, says, "Every time she opened that door, there was always a smile. She would always welcome you."

In her 34 years with Chapel Hill Transit, Amy filled many roles—dispatcher, payroll clerk, expert trainer, and a whole lot more. But Brian Litchfield says she was always happiest driving the bus. Read more at chapelboro.com/town-square/hometown-heroes/hometown-heroamy-edwards-from-chapel-hill-transit

NEW LOOK FOR PUBLIC HOUSING

Chapel Hill Public Housing has done some spring cleaning! Driving by our properties, you will see fresh, new welcome signs! Staff joined with residents to unveil new community signs to greet residents and visitors to Chapel Hill Public Housing neighborhoods.

Chapel Hill Public Housing prides itself on managing safe, quality housing for low-income families in Chapel Hill. We do our best to provide affordable housing that is indistinguishable from market rent housing, and these new signs are a beautiful representation of those efforts. We look forward to a blossoming year ahead and the opportunity to help create a bright "new normal" for our communities!

View a video of Chapel Hill Public Housing's successes from the last quarter at www.youtube.com/embed/9tokWCvHiNo

2021 ANNUAL HRA DRIVE

The annual Health Risk Assessment (HRA) has begun. You will only need to complete a questionnaire. The in-person biometric screening is waived. Complete the HRA by June 4 to ensure that cost sharing on your insurance is waived.

What you'll receive in return:

- Information to improve your health
- Cost-sharing contribution for health insurance is waived
- A personalized plan for follow-up based on your health needs and goals.

The HRA questionnaire can be completed online or on paper.

ONLINE: Log in to the secure online portal at fammed-web.med.unc.edu/ToCH and click on "Click here to start the HRA". If you can't log in, contact the clinic for assistance at 919-968-2796.

PAPER: Download the questionnaire at chapelhillwellnessatwork.org/hra. Return the completed form to the Wellness Clinic through interdepartmental mail, email, or mail.

Want to be entered into a drawing for a \$100 gift card? Complete the Employee Interest Survey! If you complete the HRA questionnaire on the secure portal, a link will be provided at the bottom of the results page. If you need a paper copy, print and return the completed survey.

Questions? Contact Liska Lackey at 919-968-2796 or llackey@email.unc.edu.



Thomas Austin (Transit) has been part of the Wellness@Work Tobacco Cessation Program at different times over the past few years. He began smoking in the '70's when cigarettes only cost 35 cents and there were no restrictions on where one could "light up." Smoking contributed to many health problems. His doctors recommended that he quit. His wife wanted him to quit. And he would quit – and then start smoking again.

Thomas realized that previously he had been quitting for someone else. This time, he wanted to do it for himself—for his health and recovery from surgeries. This paid off as he has now been smoke free for a year and half!! His advice to those who are thinking about quitting tobacco:

1. Be ready.
2. Take it seriously.
3. Keep trying – your health depends on it.

Thomas has noticed many benefits to being a non-smoker. His health, recovery time and energy have greatly improved. He doesn't have to worry about the smell in his car or on his clothes. He is also

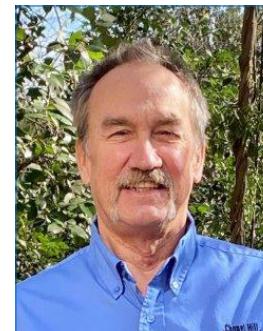
happy to be saving a lot of money.

Program Manager Barbara Silver encouraged him to think about the reasons why he was smoking

(his triggers) and they discussed ways he could "unhook" from them. Thomas and Barbara also discussed medications and they decided that Varenicline (Chantix) would work best for him – and it did.

Thomas recommends the Tobacco Cessation Program because of the individual support and encouragement. If you want support in becoming tobacco free, contact Barbara Silver at barbara.silver@med.unc.edu or 919-904-4848.

The program and medications are free. When you are tobacco free for six months you'll receive a \$100 gift card. When you are tobacco free for six more months you will receive another \$100 gift card!



LIVING HEALTHY CLASS

The free Living Healthy class is for anyone who has chronic health conditions. It lets participants take control of their health in a judgement-free zone, while connecting with others dealing with similar issues.

Participants will learn techniques to deal with problems such as frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation; how to manage medications; skills for effectively communicating with friends, family, and health care provider; tips for healthy eating and exercise; and how to make informed treatment decisions.

The class will meet on Zoom from noon to 1 p.m. on Tuesdays and Fridays from May 11 through June 18. A book and class materials will be delivered through interdepartmental mail or mailed to your home. The class is open to all Town employees, families, and pre-65 retirees.

Interested? Contact Liska Lackey at llackey@email.unc.edu or 919-968-2796.

