



The Vision

YOUR VISION FOR WILKES

OCTOBER 2010

Wilkes Facts and Figures

- ◆ More than 67,575 people live in Wilkes.
- ◆ Twenty-two percent of the population is 18 and under.
- ◆ Wilkes is the 17th largest county in NC with a land mass of 760 square miles.

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Graduation Partnership Underway for 2010-2011



Graduation Partnership began when the graduation rate in Wilkes County was a staggering 53%. Today, the rate has improved to 72.8% but there is still room for improvement.

Graduation Partnership strives to support existing educational efforts in Wilkes and encourage middle school students to make a plan to stay in school.

This year, with assistance from donors across the county, 2,383 middle school students will be encouraged by success-oriented high school students to stay in school. Middle school students will receive items that remind them to make the most of their educational opportunities and make attainable goals.

This year's sponsors include Wilkes Telecommunications and the Herring Family Foundation.

If you would like to support Graduation Partnership, contact Wilkes Vision 20/20 at 838-8662.



Dropout Prevention: A National Issue

Nationwide, nearly one in three U.S. high school students fails to graduate. In total, approximately 1.3 million students drop out each year – averaging 7,200 every school day. Among minority students, the problem is even more severe with nearly 50 percent of African American and Hispanic students not

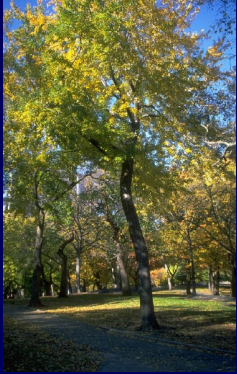
completing high school on time. Experts say that dropping out of high school affects not just students and their families, but the country overall – including businesses, government, and communities.

The Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that high school dropouts from the Class of 2006-07 will cost

the U.S. more than \$329 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity over their lifetimes.

Experts say that those who drop out are more likely to be incarcerated, rely on public programs and social services, and go without health insurance than those who graduate from high school.

Keep Wilkes Beautiful



Keep Wilkes Beautiful has joined forces with the Vision 20/20 Land Preservation group to make a greater impact on the local environment. The collective goal of the group is to engage individuals to take greater responsibility for improving our community's environment.

Linda Cheek, Wilkes Chamber of Commerce

President, is excited about the two groups joining under the Vision umbrella. "This is such an opportunity to bring land preservation to the forefront of local conversations. We have a responsibility as individuals living in Wilkes to be good stewards of our land."

Keep Wilkes Beautiful is one of many national Keep America Beautiful affiliates

across the country with goals of reducing litter and waste and promoting beautification and recycling. To learn more about local environmental initiatives, go to wilkesnc.org and click on the Keep Wilkes Beautiful link.

Vision Spotlight: Master Gardeners



Gardening is considered our nation's most popular pastime, yielding fresh fruits and vegetables for the dinner table, a cleaner environment and aesthetically pleasing landscapes. North Carolina Cooperative Extension helps gardeners learn more about new plants, native plants and environmental stewardship. Extension-trained Master Gardener volunteers are instrumental in these efforts, sharing their knowledge of plant selection, cultural practices and pest management with fellow gardeners, school students and others.

This year the Master Gardeners have taken on many worthy projects in Wilkes but one actually fed hungry people. The gardening project at Wilkes Community College featured a 400 square foot garden plot that garnered more than 700 pounds of produce that was given to hungry families in Wilkes. The program is just one example of good things going on in Wilkes. Master Gardeners in the photo are (l-r) Norma Billings, Pat Pryor, and Jan Jacob .

Tell us your story!

Do you have something innovative or exciting to share? Tell us your story of good things going on in Wilkes. Send your story to the Vision mailbox at vision@wilkesnc.org and we'll share it in the next edition of *The Vision* newsletter.

The Importance of Your Vote

United States citizens have an amazing opportunity to cast votes during each election without the worry of personal harm. Many countries around the world do not have this luxury.

Each vote counts! Before you cast your vote, find out more about the candidates and what they stand for on the issues that are important to you, your

family and community. November 2nd is election day. Take time now to learn more about the issues and candidates.

Here are some tips:

- ◆ Look for articles in the local newspapers about the candidates.
- ◆ Search for information about local, state and federal offices on the internet.
- ◆ Go to wilkescounty.net for detailed information on candidates and voting sites.
- ◆ Vote on November 2nd!



Entrepreneurs Wanted!

Wilkes County's entrepreneur spirit is alive and well, even in the midst of tough economic times. A new endeavor between multiple partners in Wilkes is generating an action plan to help new and expanding businesses. Several members attended the 2010 NC Entrepreneurship Training with the NC Rural Center. Partner agencies and individuals involved in the planning group are Wilkes Economic Development Corporation, Wilkes Chamber of Commerce, Vision 20/20, Wilkes Community College Small Business Center, Town of North Wilkesboro, Great State Bank, Leonard W. Fussell and the NC Cooperative Extension Office.





A Vision for Wilkes

Check your vision... get involved!

Vision 20/20 began more than 10 years ago with a group of people who recognized the need for thinking ahead. We all plan ahead...we save money for our children's college fund, invest in a retirement account, and pay for insurance "just in case" something

happens. However, we don't always plan for and invest our community's future. Vision 20/20 is still active today because people care and have a desire to make the world a better place for generations to come.

If you are motivated to see good things happen

in Wilkes, get involved. Contact the Vision 20/20 office for ways to help greater Wilkes now...and to make our future brighter.

Email: vision@wilkesnc.org
Call: 336.838.8662

Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.
~Warren Bennis



I want to get involved!

I am interested in learning more about how to get involved in Wilkes!

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Comments:

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