

“The Center of the State”

A NEWSLETTER FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE CITY OF ASHEBORO

FEBRUARY 2013

A Lifelong Love of Nature Led Joe Thatcher to Career as a City Biologist

Driving through North Carolina, while trying to find a teaching position, Michigan native **Joe Thatcher** happened to see a little brown sign advertising the NC Zoo. He decided to stop and check it out. **Joe** loved the Zoo so much that he went back home to Michigan, packed his bags, and moved to Asheboro to apply for a job with the zoo’s educational division. And the rest is history.

Joe spent most of his early years in northern Michigan, as the youngest of four boys. His father was a teacher, but decided to give it up and so, when he was 10 years old, his family moved to the beach in Naples, Florida, where his parents opened an art gallery. **Joe** loved living right on the beach, and quickly took to fishing and to the study of all the beautiful wildlife that surrounded him. When he was a sophomore in high school, his family moved back to northern Michigan, deep in the Hiawatha National Forest, where his closest neighbor was half a mile away, and **Joe** spent most of his days exploring in the woods.

Graduating from high school in June, 1979, **Joe** and his friends celebrated their graduation by having a snowball fight with the snow that was still on the ground from the harsh Michigan winter. He began his college career at Michigan Technical University, but finished his degrees in Biology and Secondary Education at Northern Michigan University. With 30% unemployment in Michigan, in 1987, **Joe** decided to try his luck at finding a teaching job in North Carolina. And that’s when he noticed the little brown NC Zoo sign.

Joe visited the Zoo every day to see if there were any job openings, and in the meantime took a job at Luck’s Beans, cleaning the beans before they were cooked. He was actually one of the first people to try one of Luck’s new product lines, pork and beans. He reported that it was the best pork and beans he’d ever tasted. Eventually, the Zoo hired **Joe** in a part-time position, working as a Smart Cart Operator. Smart Carts are small, hands-on learning stations set up throughout the Zoo that allow visitors and school groups to interact with animal artifacts, either real or replicas, and talk with an Exhibit Interpreter to discover more about the animals of the Park. Since the job paid minimum wage, he also worked at Biscuitville and

Black and Decker on the toaster line. After a couple of years, the Zoo offered **Joe** a full-time job supervising all of the Smart Cart Operators. In 1989, he left the education division to work in



design, and helped build the new gorilla exhibit.

Once the gorilla exhibit was completed, **Joe** found himself looking for another job. So, he decided to take a little temporary job as a lab technician at the Asheboro Wastewater Plant.

Joe found that he loved the work here, and after six years at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, he moved over as the lab technician for the Water Treatment Plant, and was eventually promoted to the position of Biologist. With his love of nature, he says that his favorite part of the job is going out, once a month, to take samples from Lake Lucas and Lake Reese. He feels that the most difficult part of the job used to be dealing with the auditors from the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources who visit the lab on a regular basis. The auditors will pull random records of water samples taken from the past year, and our lab personnel are expected to remember everything about that sample, from start to finish. But **Joe** and his colleagues must be doing something right. The auditors always report that we have one of the best labs in the state, and we get plenty of phone calls from other labs asking for advice.

As for outside interests, much of **Joe’s** free time is taken up making homemade persimmon wine, and homemade sea salt that he gives away as gifts. And you’ve probably seen a few of the community theatre productions he’s been a part of as a member of RSVP. While trying to be supportive of his daughter Meredith and her involvement in plays, the theatre “bug” bit him and now, sometimes **Joe** is an actor, and sometimes he runs things backstage as a stage manager.

What is one of the main lessons learned from the life and career of Biologist **Joe Thatcher**, and the incredible talent, knowledge and fun spirit that he has brought to the City of Asheboro over the last 23 years? Never underestimate the value of those little brown signs.

February Birthdays

Steve Bigham	Michael Leonard
Ethan Bradshaw	Mark Lineberry
Robert Caviness	Paul Maness
Dale Caviness	Jody Maness
Jason Cheek	Scott Maness
Chad Cox	Dan Pabon
Leisa Cox	J Phillips
Michele Dawes	Lee Stroud
Amr Elwarak	Rusty Turner
Chuck Garner	Troy Vincent
Arthur Heaton	Charlie Voncannon
Jesse Hunter	Susan Wigington
David Hutchins	Janet Williams
Nick Hylton	Tim Williamson
Bryan Lanier	Rickey Wilson
Jay Ledwell	Steve Wood



Start Exercising

If you haven't heard by now, the City of Asheboro has started some exercise sessions three times a week for employees. The sessions are led by our Active Living Coordinator, Lisa Park at Fire Station I (Training Room), on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:50 a.m. The classes will last anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes.

Just ten minutes of exercise might not seem like much, but it's a great stepping stone to building up to a consistent exercise routine. Start today with just 10-minutes of exercise. In no time, you'll be moving up to 20, 30, or even 60 minutes. It all starts with that first 10 minute step! If we would burn at least 150 calories a day through exercise, we could all see significant changes in our bodies. It is a known fact that by burning just 150 calories a day, there is significant reduction in heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, colon cancer, anxiety, and depression.

February is Heart Month. A quick note: "Eat Your Chocolates". Recent studies have shown dark chocolate may: Lower blood pressure, Reduce the risk of diabetes, Activate enzymes that eliminate cancer, Reduce the risk of blood clots, Keep cholesterol levels stable, and enhance cognitive function by increasing blood flow in the brain.

February Service Anniversaries

25 Years

Mark Porter—Water Meter

20 Years

Henry Hughes—Wastewater Maintenance

Felix Ward—Facilities Maintenance

10 Years

Matt Talbott—Fire

5 Years

Tracy Garnett—Facilities Maintenance

Welcome to Our New Employees

Police

Jesse Hunter—Police Officer I

Marcus Lowery—Administrative Services Asst.

Recreation

Corey Nash—Tennis Aide (Part-Time)

Street

Jeremy Gordon—Street Technician II

Make a Resolution to Exercise More

Exercise Classes are now being offered to City of Asheboro Employees now through March 7, 2013.

Instructor: **Lisa Park**, Active Living Coordinator

Where: **City of Asheboro Fire Station #1 Training Room**

Days: **Tuesdays at 8:00 a.m.**

Thursdays at 12:00 Noon

Note: You may come for one class, "OR" you may come for both classes.

Promotion

Systems Maintenance

Chuck Jordan—Systems Maintenance Mechanic II

NEW ARRIVAL !! Congratulations and best wishes to **Kim Andrews** (Fire) and her husband, Clay, on the birth of their newly adopted daughter, Hannah Faith Andrews, who was born on January 22.



Condolences

We offer our deepest sympathy to **Larry Schreiber** (Water Maintenance), whose mother, June Rose Schreiber, passed away on January 13.

Annual Blood Work-Up

It's that time of year again!

All employees interested in participating in the annual Blood Work-Up should contact City Nurse **Janet Williams** at 626-1234, x2509 to schedule an appointment.

When: January and February

Where: Employee Health Clinic (located at the Public Works Facility)

All employees and dependents covered under the city's MedCost Health Plan are encouraged to participate! Remember to fast! No food or drink other than water and black coffee (no cream or sugar). Necessary medications may be taken. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact **Janet**. Please note: If you have had blood work done recently, you will not need to have it done again.

