

# Building A Better Future!

**SIG**  
**HUTCHINSON**  
 COUNTY COMMISSIONER



## TRAVELING THE COUNTY WITH SIG



**Top row** from left to right: **APEX, CARY & ZEBULON:** Commissioners Matt Calabria and Sig meeting with local leaders. **WENDELL:** Wendell Mayor Pro Tem James Parham and Town Commissioner Sam Laughery meet with Commissioners Matt Calabria and Sig.

**Bottom row** from left to right: **TRANSIT:** At the Tarboro Rd. Community center, we had a meeting to discuss what the citizens are looking for in a transit plan. **PLM:** Jennifer Paul and Nellie with Sig at the playground of "PLM Families Together," providing housing for families experiencing homelessness in Wake County. **HISPANIC ROUNDTABLE:** Sig meets with leaders of the Hispanic community about transportation. **MAKING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS:** Mt. Peace Baptist Church with Judge Lucy Inman, her son, Rev. J. Vincent Terry and Sig.

Throughout the last ten months, I've been working with community leaders, citizens, staff members and other elected officials to develop plans for how to enhance our lives and increase the benefits of living in Wake County. Much of my time is spent thinking about how we can double in size as a community while improving our quality of life. The following is a synopsis of some of my main accomplishments during the first 10 months in office. Mostly though, I truly value and thank you for the opportunity to work on your behalf, and I am honored to serve as your county commissioner.

### PUBLIC EDUCATION

In June, we passed a budget that honored our teachers. It was supported by our school board and superintendent as we moved from consternation to collaboration. This budget gives teachers and teacher's aides a much needed raise, as we work to move teacher salaries closer to the national average. We have an excellent public school system with dedicated and committed professionals, supportive principals, a talented superintendent and a motivated school board.

Next, we will explore ways that we can work even more closely with our school system to build partnerships and leverage more resources. I am excited about the opportunities ahead to highlight all the great things happening in our Wake County schools.



Knightdale Elementary Assistant Principal Mr. McPherson and Principal Ms. James with Sig

### TEACHER'S ASSISTANT FOR A DAY

I had the opportunity to be a teacher's assistant for a day in Ms. Pearce's class at Knightdale Elementary School, along with my fellow TA Ms. Jones. With 23 kindergartners, I saw firsthand what a valuable asset our TAs provide to our kids and public education. They are on the move from the moment the buses arrive to long after the kids are gone. I experienced dedicated professionals who love their kids, their colleagues and their principal, Ms. James. They told me stories of children coming to class at age five, and how, for some, this was the first time they were away from their mothers and for others, it was the first time engaging with other kids. A few children are not even able to write their names or speak English on that first day. I saw the significance of free breakfast for kids, and the difference it makes in their ability to learn. It was an amazing day, and I want to personally thank Principal James, my teacher Ms. Pearce and my colleague, TA Ms. Jones, for this incredible opportunity.



TA Ms. Jones and some of our class at Knightdale Elementary

### What did I learn? Three things:

1. What dedicated, loving professionals we have working in our schools who earn every cent we pay them and the need to pay them more.
2. We need more pre-K opportunities for 4-year-olds. The difference it makes in their readiness for school can be the difference between success and failure, which I witnessed firsthand.
3. We need to expand our free breakfast in schools. If kids don't eat in the morning, they can't learn. I saw the difference it makes when children have some fuel in their little engines. A good breakfast at home or at school makes them ready and eager to learn.

### TRANSIT

If there is one thing we can all agree on regarding transit, it is that we have to **GET STARTED!** That's why 2016 will be the **"The Year of Transit."** We will work to pass the half-cent sales tax referendum intended to improve transportation for all of our citizens -- whether they actually use transit or the expanded bus system. As we get organized for the referendum, Commissioner Matt Calabria and I have been visiting with every municipality; talking to mayors, councilors, planners and managers asking them what they need in the plan for their community to be supportive. Out of these many conversations has come amazing levels of clarity of what our citizens want and need. We look forward to continuing these meetings with municipalities and community leaders helping to shape a transit plan that works for everyone.



Holly Springs Mayor Dick Sears meets with Commissioners Matt Calabria and Sig.

### FOOD INSECURITY AND OUR CHILDREN

In Wake County, we have **133,000** citizens who worry about not having enough to eat. One in four children deal with food insecurity daily. No child should go hungry. This is not just a catch phrase; it is an issue that, as county commissioners, we take seriously. We are working to find ways of providing more plentiful and healthier food choices. We're looking at organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs' to provide more summer feeding programs in 2016 and beyond. In addition, Commissioner Jessica Holmes has been working to expand Backpack Buddies so kids have sufficient food when school is not in session. Commissioner Matt Calabria is also partnering with the school system to expand breakfast programs.



Kids singing at kick off for the summer nutrition program "Jump Start Celebration," sponsored by the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina

## FOOD BANK OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Serving 34 counties with more than 57 million pounds of food including 27 million pounds of fresh produce, the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina serves citizens and a critical need here in our state. With a \$12 million budget, the Food Bank raised \$9 million of that from private sources serving more than 800 partnering agencies. Commissioner Matt Calabria and I spent a morning listening to elements of their programs, watching volunteers turn raw sweet potatoes into packaged goods and learning about future plans for expansion. Next time you get an offer to contribute to the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina, consider writing a check knowing these funds are going to a great cause — feeding those in need.



"Fostering Bright Futures" 7th Annual Banquet highlighting amazing stories of success with former foster teens and now graduates of Wake Tech

## FOSTERING BRIGHT FUTURES

Foster care in Wake County serves more than 700 children and youth. These kids are under our care until they become adults and exit the system. It's unfortunate that there are few resources or programs that offer support once these young people actually do exit the program. Now, Wake Tech, along with the United Way and other sponsors, have started a successful education program to provide free tuition to children who have been in foster care. I had the wonderful opportunity to attend the 7th Annual Banquet honoring a class of recent graduates and new inductees from this program. There wasn't a dry eye in the house after Ms. Keilia Scott and Ms. Christy Setola-Cyr told their stories of how they had overcome adversity to achieve academic success. These are the type of programs I love to attend as a commissioner, seeing firsthand how lives are being changed as a result of our work.

## BUILDING A CULTURE OF HEALTH

A major goal for 2016 is **Building a Culture of Health**. It fashions after the work of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Our Healthiest Capital County initiative works on issues such as: poverty; at-risk youth; healthy food and active lifestyles. Considering how our policies impact the health of our citizens is also a component of the concept. To that end, **Advocates for Health in Action**, along with **Active Living by Design** and support from the **John Rex Endowment** sponsored City Manager Bill Lindsay of Richmond, California to speak to elected officials, planners and staff. We learned how Mr. Lindsay is working with all facets of municipal staff to consider the health application in everything they do. This concept, called **Health in all Policies**, is something I look to implement in Wake County. We want to work to build healthier and happier citizens. At this seminar, I had the opportunity to talk to a dear friend, Dr. Leah Devlin, who is dedicating her time to building healthy communities, and is now on the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Board.



Dr. Leah Devlin with Sig at the "Health in all Policies" presentation by Richmond CA City Manager Bill Lindsay and sponsored by Advocates for Health in Action

## LOCAL HEALTHY FOOD

Local healthy food is so important for our community in so many ways. From economic development to food insecurity; from helping build a sustainable planet to just plain good eating, local food is a centerpiece in helping build a **"Culture of Health"** in Wake County. As a model for success, I had the opportunity to tour **LL Urban Farms** and visit with one of the owners, former Cary Mayor Glen Lang. On less than an acre of land off Holly Springs Road, Lang is growing pesticide-free tomatoes, cucumbers, beans, squash, and lettuce. In addition to his own products, LL Urban Farms also offers local eggs, cheeses, honey, beef and fresh seafood from the coast in its roadside market. Since all the products are grown hydroponically, this abundance of produce can be grown without chemicals on 10 percent of the normal water, and 15 percent of the normal fertilizers of a typical farm. This is not only a great model of what urban farming can look like, but Mayor Lang and his team are ready to partner with other organizations in doing this work. Partners like the Interfaith Food Shuttle help to create new farmers and farms, and focus on more locally grown produce. If you are near LL Urban Farms, do yourself a favor, stop by and ask former Mayor Lang for a tour.



## PARTNERSHIP WITH ST. AUGUSTINE'S COLLEGE

Dr. Everett Ward, president of St. Augustine's University; Jill Bullard of the Interfaith Food Shuttle; and I have been meeting with representatives from the university, Duke Raleigh Hospital, the Jamie Kirk Hahn Foundation and DHIC to talk about how we might build a partnership to re-purpose one of the existing buildings that is very close to campus. The idea is to create public health educational opportunities for the university, a community clinic and cultivate an active teaching garden. This is an exciting opportunity and I look forward to doing even more of this kind of collaborative work.



L to R: Whitney Edmister, Community Member; Dr. Mark Melton, St. Augustine's University; Dr. Terrence Ruth, The William and IDA Friday Institute for Educational Innovation and AllMKids; Infinity Wake; Sue Lynn Ledford, Public Health Director, Wake County; Amanda Cooper, Duke Raleigh Hospital; Dr. Everett Ward, President of St. Augustine's University; Melissa Haithcox-Dennis, MHD Public Health Consulting; Jill Stanton Bullard, CEO Interfaith Food Shuttle; Yvette Holmes, DHIC; Alexis Trost, Executive Director; Jamie Kirk Hahn Foundation; Dr. Derrick Sauls, St. Augustine's University; and Sig



Councillor Michael Schlink, Morrisville Town Council; Wake County Commissioner Jessica Holmes; and Sig

## THE STRENGTH OF OUR DIVERSITY

What I love about our community is the diversity. It's not uncommon to be downtown and to hear several languages being spoken, in addition to English. As an elected representative, one of my greatest joys is to be with different cultures and people celebrating their history, food, dance and customs. That couldn't be more evident than being with my brothers and sisters from the Indian-American Community in Morrisville. We are lucky to have the Indian-Americans as part of our community celebrating their strength along with ours. All of us are proud of our American heritage, yet equally proud of the traditions and culture of our ancestors. On August 15, with a large community of Indian-Americans, we celebrated India's Independence Day at the Hindu Society of NC Temple. We are fortunate to have such a warm and gracious community in Morrisville, as all the elected officials who attended felt so appreciated and accepted. Collectively, we are of one nation, celebrating the strength that diversity brings to our way of life.

## GREENWAYS

We all love our greenways! Most of us can even identify a favorite greenway. Yet, over the years of greenways development, including 117 miles of greenways in Raleigh and 80 miles in Cary, we have yet to develop a master plan for Wake County and a Triangle-wide greenway system. This plan should identify priority corridors and could possibly lead to additional state or federal funding to continue the expansion of the greenway system. This effort is part of the move-forward plan on using open space bond money to fund six new greenway projects in partnership with Wake Forest, Rolesville, Morrisville, Apex, Cary and Holly Springs. These projects will add five additional miles to the existing greenway grid for a total cost of a little more than \$5 million. These new greenways will add crucially important links within the grid to allow even more citizens to access the larger greenway network.



Sherri Henderson with Nancy and Sig biking the greenways



Sig and Wake County Commissioner Jessica Holmes with an aspiring bookworm of Athens Drive Community Library

## ATHENS DRIVE COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Recently, you may have heard that **Athens Drive Community Library** was going to close its doors. It was a tough decision made by staff to increase efficiencies within the system. Community champions like Yvonne Brannon and your commissioners met with the community to devise a plan that would keep the library open, as well as increase operating hours, hire more staff, upgrade the signage, increase parking, and improve the programming. Commissioner Jessica Holmes organized an open house that had many festivities, including a puppet show. The "More with Four" commissioners even became "Super Heroes" for the day donning our favorite comic book character masks. In all, this is why we are commissioners. Happy children and thrilled parents — each group strengthens the community overall, and it was a day with nothing but smiles.

Thank you for your continued friendship.  
Nancy and I wish you a happy and safe fall season!

**SIG HUTCHINSON**  
COUNTY COMMISSIONER

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