

## WOMEN

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of the APWC Community Giving Committee. APWC has awarded WIT grants for more than 15 years.

In 2017 a grant was awarded to Sarah Branham of Hertford, a single mother of five, working two jobs with a dream of running her own restaurant someday. The WIT grant enabled her to complete an online course in hotel and restaurant management to advance her career and her achieve her ultimate goal.

In 2016 a WIT grant was awarded to Diane Sawyer Nordstrom to enhance her newly created small business, Nordstrom Events,

as an event planner. She researched the best training opportunities that fit her needs and found an online course offered by the New York Institute of Art and Design to sharpen her skills to build a successful business. She planned to use a small portion of her grant award to provide additional web-based resources on her website [www.nordstromevents.com](http://www.nordstromevents.com).

In 2015 two WIT grants were awarded. Bridgette Bryant from Belvidere was awarded funds that enabled her to complete her teaching certification process.

Also, Diana Devine from Hertford, a paralegal, was awarded funds enabling her to enroll in law school with the goal of becoming

a practicing attorney.

The grants are open to all women that are over the age of 18 and live in Perquimans County. The financial assistance is to help a woman to advance her educational opportunities or to assist a female-owned small business to develop resources.

Applications are available at:

Chamber of Commerce Office, 118 W. Market St., Hertford

Perquimans County Library.

By sending an email to [apwcgrants@gmail.com](mailto:apwcgrants@gmail.com)

Or, send a brief letter of interest to: The Albemarle Plantation Women's Club, Women in Transition Grant Program, c/o 102 Cooper Circle, Hertford, NC 27944

# State reports prison is still understaffed

BY JON HAWLEY  
The Daily Advance

Three months after a deadly escape attempt, Pasquotank Correctional Institution remains seriously understaffed, based on numbers the N.C. Department of Public Safety reported Friday.

There are 104 vacancies currently at PCI, DPS spokesman Jerry Higgins reported in an email to The Daily Advance. That's compared to 312 full-time positions, meaning roughly 1 in 4 full-time positions are unfilled. Of the 104 vacancies, 75 are for correctional officers. The prison has 189 correctional officers currently, he reported.

While PCI still lacks staff, the employees there now are not stretched as thinly as they were on Oct. 12, when inmates attempted to escape. They failed, but still killed four employees in the process.

Three of the four dead had Perquimans County ties. Geoffrey Howe went to Perquimans County High School. Wendy Shannon, as well as correction enterprise sewing plant manager Veronica Darden were residents of Perquimans County. Correctional officer Justin Smith lived in Elizabeth City.

Higgins reported DPS has reduced the prison population to be more manageable. He didn't share an ex-

act number, but a search of DPS's website shows PCI's population was 588 as of Dec. 31. That's compared to the 725 inmates DPS reported in an Oct. 13 release.

Nevertheless, a report from the National Institute of Corrections has warned there's a "critical need" to better staff the prison. In the report that DPS released this week, the NIC's prison experts found under-staffing contributed to unsafe conditions and employees cutting corners.

An Associated Press report published in Friday's Daily Advance summarizes that report. Among the striking excerpts:

■ Following the escape attempt, PCI commonly told the NIC the deaths occurred because of an "overwhelming shortage of security staff." They also appeared "emotionally drained" but carried on with the jobs.

■ One correctional officer was often expected to do the work of two officers in the sewing plant, where the escape attempt started. The officer vacancy there allowed freer movement of inmates and made it hard to effectively supervise them.

■ DPS policy is that a complete search of the prison for contraband is required every six months. "There is no record of the last time the Correction Enterprise Sewing Plant was searched," the report states.

■ PCI's gatehouse did not

follow practices required for identifying visitors and sending them through a metal detector; entrance procedures were "lessened due to the amount of staff entering and exiting the facility."

■ The NIC team observed the gatehouse's gun cabinet doors left open and unsecured during a shift change.

■ PCI did not annually review the majority of its emergency plans, and there was a lack of training and drills for them.

■ There was confusion for staff on proper policies for controlling keys; the NIC also speculated "personal keys could very well have played a significant role" in the escape attempt.

During the escape attempt, the sewing plant manager left open a door to a hallway that should have been locked. "The unlocked door helped inmates facilitate the attack on staff and carry out their attempted escape."

■ Pasquotank's last security audit prior to the escape attempt was in February 2017, and the NIC team found non-compliance in the audit's "key and lock control" section. "It was evident the auditors did not conduct a thorough audit" and employees suggested there was a "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours" approach to inter-departmental audits.

## BUILDING

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from the Perquimans Senior Center.

The Albemarle region consists of Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hyde, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell and Washington counties.

Davison said most counties were receptive to the plan, but Davison said Pasquotank officials were not.

"Pasquotank turned down the idea of building a new building, so we've circled the wagons to see what we can do to work with Perqui-

mans County."

Davison said Pasquotank officials were hesitant to commit to paying their share of the new structure.

"I completely understand their point," Davison said.

If for some reason, the Albemarle Commission were dissolved, the counties would still be liable for the debt service for the building. Also if Pasquotank ever decided to pull out of the regional group, it would still have to pay its pro-rated share.

Because Pasquotank is the largest of the counties, it pays the largest share of

local funds for the Commission, about 23 percent.

With the biggest player out of the game, Davison said it was unlikely the Local Government Commission would sign off on borrowing the money.

The commission is largely funded by federal and state funds. They make up about three quarters of the Commission's budget, but the counties make up the other quarter.

The Commission administers programs dealing with seniors, and job training. It also works on regional transportation and economic development issues.

## RIVERBASH

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will be sold at the gate.

Some of the other events that weekend include a pancake breakfast, a fishing tournament for kids, a paddling demonstration, an exhibit by Sea Grant, an exhibit by Old Dominion Model Boat-

ers, a pirate demonstration, miniature horses and a petting zoo, a bounce house, archery tag, an art walk on the courthouse lawn, an open air painting demonstration, a gospel sing, a Coast Guard rescue simulation, a water taxi between Missing Mill Part and Winfall landing, a homegrown and handmade craft market and live enter-

tainment.

Some of the already scheduled events for that weekend include the Unhilly Hundred Bike Ride, and a garden show at the Perquimans County Recreation Center.

For more information or to find out how to get involved, contact Smith at 426-5657.

# PAL planning art classes

From Staff Reports

The Perquimans Arts League will offer drawing classes with E.M. Corsa in January and February: Backyard Wild on Jan. 26;

Backyard Wild for parent and child on Feb. 3; Create a Sea Monster for parent and child on Feb. 17 and Create Your Own Sea Monster for adults on Feb. 21. All classes are 9 a.m. until noon.

For more information and class fees, visit [www.perquimansarts.org/classes.html](http://www.perquimansarts.org/classes.html) or call the gallery at 426-3041.

PAL will also offer several workshops with nationally-known watercolor artists. Watercolor Batik with Ryan Fox will be on Feb. 24 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Newbold-White House Visitor Center. The fee is \$70

for PAL members and \$75 for non-members, which includes lunch.

There will be two two-day workshops with Carol Carter on April 30 and May 1 and on May 2 and 3. The cost for the two-day workshop is \$225 for PAL members and \$250 for non-members.

A deposit of \$50 will hold your space in the workshop. For more about the artist, visit [www.carol-carter.com](http://www.carol-carter.com). For additional workshop info and registration, visit [www.perquimansarts.org](http://www.perquimansarts.org) or call the gallery at 426-3041.

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**MILITARY**

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"Coming from a small town, you see what's available for these children and there is nothing here."

Her youngest, Spencer Harris, graduated PCHS in 2017 and joined the Army right away and has now finished boot camp and is going through additional training in Kentucky.

Harris said she was amazed at the transformation of her sons after they enlisted.

"There were like a lot of kids and talked in a red-neck way and mumbled a lot. But after boot camp, it was like they weren't my boys anymore. They really

grew up in 18 weeks."

The oldest has been stationed in South Korea and Germany and spent time in Afghanistan. Harris admits that's tough on a Mom, but she knows it's what's right for her children.

"Military life is not easy, but I'm here to support any Mom who wants to talk," Harris said.

Being in the military does require moving, Hinton admits. She remembers when she got orders to report to Kansas, and she wasn't thrilled.

"The only think I knew about Kansas was from watching Wizard of Oz. But it turns out we had an amazing time. When it came time, I didn't want to leave."

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