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## Anson gets positive report from N.C. Partnership for Children director

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The Anson County Partnership for Children welcomed a special guest to its board meeting last Thursday, and held a literacy event later that day.

The Partnership board welcomed North Carolina Partnership for Children president Cindy Watkins to its board meeting

Board members provided updates in several areas, including its annual children's visit with Santa, childcare subsidy, Dolly Parton Imagination Library, and more.

Anson County Health Department director Dr. Fred Thompson apprised the board of the county's improved teen pregnancy rate. "We've been working on reducing the teen pregnancy rate," Thompson said. "We used to have the highest rate of all 100 counties. As the result of the efforts of many, including several in this room, we've moved from 100 to 18. But we're still above the state average, so we still have some work to do."

Donald Perkins, the librarian at the Hampton B. Allen Library, provided the numbers from the 2013 Raising a Reader program. "We had six Raising a Reader sites, but that number moved to 11 after the Barn Blast," he said. "A total of 266 children were served, and 29 percent of the surveys showed an increase in the number of times per month that families visited the library. Over 50 percent in the survey showed an increase in parents reading with their kids."

During the annual report, Thompson referenced the Oct. 9 issue of "The Chronicle of Philanthropy," which listed Anson as the most generous county in North Carolina despite its economically depressed small population. See related story on A1.

Watkins said she could believe the positive report after attending the board meeting. "I have not felt this kind of community, hopefulness and enthusiasm anywhere else," she said.

Watkins said that after the elections, she is hopeful about a political change in how early children and early childhood education are prioritized. She said she has heard of an African tradition where tribal leaders would say, "How are the children doing?" as their first order of business. "They knew that the health of the community depended on that," she said. "It led every single decision. I believe there will be a day when someone will say, 'How will that affect the children?'"

But locally, Watkins said that Anson has done well in providing for its children. "You've done an amazing job here."

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