

ACHS named CFNC Financial Aid Champion

The North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA) has announced Alexander Central High School is among the 2026 CFNC Financial Aid Champions. The authority is honoring the schools for their commitment to following financial aid best practices.

In total, 70 schools, districts, and college access organizations participated in the Financial Aid Champions program this year. On average, the schools that received the designation saw a 7.8 percentage point increase in their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates this year over 2024-25.

"This shows that following best practices moves the needle for students trying to find ways to make paying for college more manageable," said Mary Shuping, executive director of NCSEAA, the state agency that is the primary sponsor of College for North Carolina (CFNC). "We are highlighting these 70 Champions for their commitment to helping students begin their post-secondary journey and achieving their goals."

The Financial Aid Champion designation celebrates educators for their hard work using some of the best methods for helping students access financial aid.

Participants chose from an easy-to-follow menu of options on the CFNC website focused on proven financial aid strategies.

Those who received the Financial Aid Champion designation will get CFNC materials that help promote access to aid in their schools to use with students and parents. They

Kim Pennell book signing set for June 5

Retired nurse and local author Kim Pennell, RN, BSN, will hold a book signing on Friday, June 5, at 6:30 p.m. at The Rustic Roast coffee shop, located at 103 East Main Avenue, in Taylorsville.

Entitled *A Nurse I Am... Because Of Whose I Am*, Kim's book is as much a devotional writing as a memoir as she "shares more than four decades of experience serving patients, families, and fellow caregivers," the book jacket notes.

The book is available on Amazon at <https://a.co/d/09BNNEet>.

will also receive an e-mail badge noting the designation, and their school, district, or organization name will be highlighted on CFNC's web site. The Financial Aid Champions will also be honored at CFNC's regional trainings in the fall.

The Financial Aid Champions earned a minimum of 100 points by completing activities among the Financial Aid Champion options. Below is the

complete list of champions: The North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA) is the State agency that has been helping North Carolinians pay for education since 1965. NCSEAA administers financial aid and savings programs, helps students and families understand how to make paying for college more manageable, and provides resources for education professionals about financial aid.

Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church Women's Retreat set for May 30

All women are warmly invited to join the Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church Women's Retreat on Saturday, May 30, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

This special day will include inspiring speakers, live music, hands-on crafts, a book exchange, and a salad and potato bar lunch.

This event is completely free and open to all women,

regardless of denomination or church affiliation, so feel free to invite a friend. The ladies simply hope you'll come as you are and enjoy a meaningful time of connection and community.

Those attending should register on the church website. Contact Laura Barnes or Yvonne Osborne for more information.

Summer Reading begins soon at the Bethlehem Branch Library

By ANGELA FARR KING

The 2026 Collaborative Summer Reading Program (CSLP) will soon kick off nationwide with the theme "Unearth a story," emphasizing the joy of discovery through reading. According to 2026: Unearth a Story - CSLP Summer Reading Program, "CSLP is excited to announce the 2026 Summer Reading Program theme: Unearth a Story, which underscores the joy of discovery that reading brings and that every person and every community have stories waiting to be found and shared - through books, programs, and local knowledge. CSLP is proudly partnering with the beloved American Museum of Natural History in New York City for resources and decorations for this theme."

At all branches of the Alexander County Library, including the Bethlehem Branch, the program will

kick off on Friday, June 5, at a special event at the Alexander Central High School Auditorium located at 223 School Drive in Taylorsville. Bright Star Touring Theater will present "Dino Academy: A Dinosaur Discovery Show" at 10:00 a.m. on this day.

This is the same day that readers can begin tracking their reading for the Summer. This is for children and adults. There are many extra activities planned for the Summer to coincide with this fun and exciting program. People can drop by the Bethlehem Branch, located at 45 Rink Dam Road in Bethlehem. Reading times can be tracked manually or on a phone app. Call the Bethlehem Branch at 828-495-8753 for more information about the Summer Reading Program and all of the activities.

The library is also look-

ing for volunteers to help offer more activities for the Summer Reading Program. There are volunteer forms available at library branches. Here is a list of activities that volunteers are needed for: solicit donations of incentive prizes from local businesses, assist the librarian with storytime or other programs, organize or help with a craft program, help with games or sports activities, chaperone a reading party or field trip, provide refreshments for storytime, or organize a workshop using a special skill.

Local libraries do a great job encouraging children to read over the Summer, which will inevitably help them stay on track for the beginning of school in August and adults who read consistently keep sharper minds, build more in depth vocabulary, and sleep better at night.

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PO Box 279
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28681

(828) 632-2532
(828) 632-7438
Fax: (828) 632-8233

www.taylorsville.com
times.com

Micah Henry
Editor
news@taylorstilletimes.com

ADVERTISING
ads@taylorstilletimes.com
taylorstilletimes.com