

The Orange County Government Gazette

Serving Orange County Residents since 1752

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Orange County Announces 2026 Government Academy

Orange County is excited to announce the launch of the 2026 Government Academy, a comprehensive program designed to educate residents about the inner workings of Orange County government. The program begins Wednesday, Feb. 25, and concludes with a graduation ceremony on Tuesday, April 21, at the Whitted Human Services Building in Hillsborough.

The 2026 Government Academy offers an eight-session curriculum held mostly on Wednesday evenings from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Sessions include in-person tours of key county facilities. Participants must attend five classes to qualify for graduation. The course is open to all county residents aged 16 and older.

Key Highlights of the 2026 Academy:
Interactive Learning: Faculty from the UNC School of Government will provide an overview of county government, while Orange County staff will present insights into their departments.

Exclusive Tours: Participants will explore facilities such as the 911 Call Center, Animal Services, and the new Drakeford Library Complex.

Graduation Ceremony: The cohort will graduate in person on April 21, followed by recognition at the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) meeting.

Tentative Schedule Overview:

The academy covers a wide range of topics, including presentations from 19 county departments:

Wednesday, Feb. 25 – the cohort will get to know each other, set goals for the course, and hear a County Government 101 presentation from the School of Government. Location: TBD

Wednesday, March 4 – the cohort will meet at the Animal Services facility in Chapel Hill to get a behind the scenes tour and will also get a tour and presentation from the Solid Waste Department. Location: 1601 Eubanks Road, Chapel Hill

Wednesday, March 11 – the cohort will meet with Dept. on Aging staff and get a tour of one of their facilities. They will also hear presentations from Child Support Services and the Tax Department. Location: Seymour Center, 2551 Homestead Road, Chapel Hill

Wednesday, March 18 – the cohort will get a tour of the Drakeford Library Complex in Carrboro by Orange County Public Library staff. They will also hear presentations by the Economic Development Department and the Housing Department. Location: 203 S. Greensboro St., Carrboro

Wednesday, March 25 – the cohort will hear from the Sustainability Program, the Criminal Justice Resource Department, the Department of Environment, Parks, and Recreation, and the Planning and Inspections Department. Location: TBD

Wednesday, April 1 – TBD



***Thursday, April 9** – the cohort will get a behind-the-scenes tour of the 911 call center and hear presentations from the Emergency Services Department, as well as the Office of Civil Rights and Civic Life and the Health Department. Location: 510 Meadowlands Road, Hillsborough

***Tuesday, April 21**, the cohort will be joined by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) Chair Jean Hamilton for a graduation ceremony. They will hear a presentation from the clerk to the board about volunteer opportunities for Boards and Commissions. At 7 p.m., the cohort will be recognized at the beginning of the BOCC meeting and will have a group photo with the Board. Location: Whitted Human Services Building, 301 Tryon St., Hillsborough

About Orange County Government Academy
The Government Academy is a dynamic program that fosters community engagement and understanding of county government operations. Participants gain firsthand insights into county departments, engage with county staff, and explore how they can contribute to their community's growth and well-being.

Apply Today
Applications are open until Feb. 11, 2026. To join the 2026 cohort, fill out the application at this link.

Learn more about the County Government Academy: <https://orangecountync.gov/countygovernmentacademy>
For questions, contact Wil Glenn at 919-245-2302 or wglenn@orangecountync.gov.

Orange County Recreation Releases New Program Guide for 2026

Orange County Recreation is pleased to announce the release of its latest Recreation Program Guide, highlighting a wide range of recreation opportunities available January through June 2026. Published twice a year, the guide showcases a variety of programs designed to serve residents of all ages, interests, and abilities.

The new Program Guide is packed with detailed listings of after-school and out-of-school programs, early childhood enrichment, youth and adult athletics, arts and cooking classes, childcare services, and nature-based education programs. Seasonal highlights include popular community events such as the Family Valentine's Dance and the Community Egg Hunt.

Early childhood programming is a major focus of the 2026 guide in response to growing community interest. Six-week sessions in art, science, cooking, and athletics are offered during weekday daytime hours as well as evenings and weekends to accommodate busy family schedules.

Standout offerings include the nature-based Hillsborough Little Hikers and Buckets and Boots programs, which encourage young children and their caregivers to explore and learn together in Orange County's natural spaces.

Orange County Recreation also provides a full spectrum of childcare services in a fun, safe, and familiar environment. Programs include Preschool Academy for children ages 3 to 5, which features curriculum-based, age-appropriate learning in numbers, letters, colors, rhythm, and science.

After School programs serve students from five traditional Orange County Schools calendar schools and offer three hours of enrichment daily, including sports and fitness, homework assistance, and STEAM-based activities. Additionally, School's Out Fun Day Camp provides all-day care for Pre-K through fifth-grade students on select school holidays and teacher workdays. More than 75 themed, enrichment-based summer camps are also offered, with summer camp information to be released in late January.

Athletic programming continues to be a cornerstone of Orange County Recreation,

promoting physical activity, teamwork, and community connection. Spring offerings include a Youth Soccer League for ages 4 to 14 and a Girls Volleyball League for ages 8 to 14. Summer programs feature basketball leagues for youth ages 5 to 13 as well as adults.

Additional programs highlighted in the guide include cooking, art, and science classes for ages 3 to 11; chess for ages 5 to 18; martial arts; yoga; and Tai Chi.

The digital Recreation Program Guide is free and available online at any time at www.orangecountync.gov/Recreation. Residents are also encouraged to subscribe to the "Recreation in Orange County" newsletter and follow @orangecountyncrec on social media for regular updates and reminders about upcoming programs and activities.

Orange County Recreation is a division of the Orange County Department of Environment, Agriculture, Parks and Recreation. Its mission is to provide affordable, high-quality recreational opportunities that promote healthy lifestyles, teach important life skills, and strengthen the Orange County community.



Orange County
Community Giving Fund

Find out more: orangecountync.gov/CGF

Let's Fix It At The REPAIR CAFÉ!

Work with volunteer repair coaches to fix your broken items!

Gain new skills and keep trash out of the landfill, while saving money and having fun!

Bring your clothes that need mending, as well as damaged electronics, furniture, jewelry, or small appliances!

Saturday, January 10

1-4pm

Seymour Center
2551 Homestead Road
Chapel Hill

To register, volunteer or contribute, go to:
RepairCafeNC.org

COLD WEATHER SHELTERS

November 1 – March 31

IFC SHELTER AVAILABLE EVERY NIGHT

Inter-Faith Council for Social Service (IFC)*
(Men) 1315 M.L.K. Jr Blvd., Chapel Hill
(Women) 2505 Homestead Rd., Chapel Hill
CALL: 919-929-6380
(Men) ext. 3000, (Women) ext. 4000
Arrive between 6pm and 8pm (let staff know if you're working and will be late). Leave by 8am.
**Must check daily for availability.*

ORANGE COUNTY SHELTER AVAILABLE WHEN TEMPS ARE AT OR BELOW 32° F

7pm-7am (Men, Women, and Children)

Chapel Hill Location:
828 M.L.K. Jr Blvd, Chapel Hill
Please call (919) 245-2490 for more information and to confirm which days the shelter will be open.

Beginning Monday, Dec. 15, the Emergency Cold Weather Shelter in Hillsborough will be suspended. Residents needing transportation to the Chapel Hill shelter may contact the Street Outreach Team by 6 p.m. at (919) 886-3351 for assistance and availability. Additionally, free bus routes are available for transportation to the Chapel Hill shelter.

Apart from cold weather shelter, **dinner is provided weekdays from 5:00-5:45pm** at IFC Commons Community Kitchen, 110 West Main Street, Carrboro.

For more info: orangecountync.gov/OCPEH

FREE!

Passport to Retirement

An educational course customized for retirees and those planning for their retirement.

Participants will learn how to define and create their retirement, assess the costs, evaluate income, invest for the future, protect health and wealth, and more! A comprehensive 135-page workbook is included with resources.

Instructors: *Janna Deegan & Michelle Daniel of Opus Financial Advisors.*

Tuesday, Jan. 13 & Thursday, Jan. 15 • 6-8pm

Seymour Center, 2551 Homestead Rd, Chapel Hill, NC

Register by Tuesday, Jan. 6 by calling 919-968-2070.

Make a New Year's Resolution TO VOLUNTEER TO SERVE

Residents can have a positive impact on the future of Orange County by serving on a volunteer board or commission.

The Board of Commissioners is currently recruiting applicants for a wide variety of Boards and Commissions.

- Adult Care Home and Nursing Home Community Advisory Committee
- Animal Services Advisory Board
- Animal Services Hearing Panel Pool
- Arts Commission
- Board of Equalization and Review
- Carrboro Board of Adjustment (Transition Area & Carrboro ETJ residents only)
- Chapel Hill Board of Adjustment (Chapel Hill ETJ & JPA residents only)
- Commission for the Environment
- Economic Development Advisory Board
- Hillsborough Planning Board (Hillsborough ETJ residents only)
- Human Relations Commission
- Opioid Advisory Committee
- Orange County Housing Authority Board
- Orange County Planning Board
- Orange Unified Transportation Board
- Parks and Recreation Council

www.orangecountync.gov/Apply

For additional information contact **Tara May** at 919-245-2125 or tmay@orangecountync.gov.

Free Bus Rides Starting January 2!

- Free service on all Fixed Routes: Hillsborough Orange & Blue Loops, Orange-Alamance Connector and Orange-Chapel Hill Connector
- Faster boarding and improved on-time performance
- Broad access to jobs, schools, healthcare, and other key destinations

To plan your trip, go to:
orangecountync.gov/FixedRoutes

WE ARE HIRING!

To learn more about job opportunities available in Orange County Government, please visit www.orangecountync.gov/Careers or contact the Human Resources Recruitment Manager at (919) 245-2557