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CATAWBA COUNTY LAUNCHES ONE STOP ONLINE LOCATION FOR WEALTH OF COUNTY DATA

Catawba County has launched a performance dashboard, a program that will be the gateway for hundreds of pieces of data on dozens of topics related to the County government, demographics and quality of life.

Catawba County Facts and Figures, which may be accessed at http://www.catawbacountync.gov/budget/PerformanceDashboard.swf, offers users a choice of exploring data grouped into eight broad categories. Clicking on the button for each category allows the user to drill down into many other data sets within that content area.

"Catawba County values transparency and accountability. Creating the performance dashboard is a step towards becoming more transparent and accountable to our citizens," said Mary Furtado, Assistant County Manager. "The dashboard showcases where and how tax dollars are spent, highlights the broad range of County services we provide, and emphasizes the County's focus on generating results that improve quality of life for our community. The dashboard also allows us to benchmark our performance against the State and our peers, and report out the status of the various goals and objectives we are pursuing."

Created by County Budget Analyst Paul Murray, the dashboard offers users the choice of seeking data on General County Information, Education, Public Safety, Human Services, Economic and Physical Development, Culture, Environmental Quality and General Government. Once a user selects one of those broad topics, he or she will be taken to another screen with additional choices, including:

General County Information- offers data on the county's population, median age and other demographics, housing units, age and starts, economic data on jobs, average wages and the poverty level, employment by sector and unemployment data. There is also a set of data on agriculture in the county, including farm acreage and number of farms. Information on educational attainment at the high school, bachelor and graduate degree level is also included.

Education- a variety of data on the number of pupils in the three County public school systems and Catawba Valley Community College, funding to each of the school systems, the percentage of local dollars appropriated to education and the number of Schools of Distinction in each system.

Public Safety- offers three broad categories: Emergency Services, the Sheriff's Office and 911 Communications Center. In each, there is data on such topics as ambulance response times and call volume, number of animals received at the County Animal Shelter, number of calls by fire department and number of fire inspections, Sheriff's Office calls, crime rate data and number of prisoners in the County jail and Burke-Catawba District Confinement Facility, as well as the number of 911 calls answered and dispatch times.

Human Services- gives users a choice of selecting data about Social Services or Public Health. Under Public Health, there is data on restaurant inspections, birth rates, child, school and dental health and bioterrorism preparedness. For Social Services, there is information on the number of Food and Nutrition Service clients,

Medicaid clients, and Senior Nutrition program participants.

Economic and Physical Development- leads to three broad choices: Technology, Planning, Parks and Development, and Utilities and Engineering. Under Technology, users may get information about the number of visitors to the County web site and its Facebook and Twitter followers, as well as online payments. The Planning, Development and Parks tab gives a very broad set of data on residential zoning and other permits, subdivision plats, acreage currently in the County's Voluntary Agricultural District Program, attendance at the three County Parks, volunteer opportunities with the parks and more. Under Utilities and Engineering, users may choose a variety of data related to building inspections, erosion and code compliance cases, the amount of solid waste taken in at the County Landfill and collected at Household Hazardous Waste collections and revenues generated and from methane to energy operations, and the County per capita recycling ranking.

Culture- this button currently provides data on the number of books and other materials circulated by the Catawba County Library branches and the number of visitors to the Catawba County and Hickory Public Libraries.

Environmental Quality- a broad spectrum of information on the number of people participating in such programs as 4-H and Master Gardeners, the impact of farming in the county by many different measurements and volunteers serving in Cooperative Extension programs.

General Government- currently presents six other broad categorical choices: Budget and Financial Information, Legal, Human Resources, Tax, Board of Elections and Register of Deeds. The Budget and financial information includes total County spending and County revenues by type as well as the County's fund balance and amount of debt outstanding. Under Legal information, data on contracts, services and delinquent monies collected is available. The Human Resources tab shows a wealth of demographics on the County's employee diversity, any recordable injuries, turnover percentages and number of employees per 1000 citizens. The Tax information gives statistical breakdowns on property tax collection and history, the Board of Elections has information on such things as the number of registered voters and election turnout, as well as costs and the Register of Deeds gives information on the number of deed, foreclosure, birth, death and marriage records that are available and on progress in digitizing information.

"I'm very pleased that all this data is now available to the public from one web page," said Dave Hardin, Catawba County's Public Information Officer. "The performance dashboard is very well designed, presenting all of the information in colorful bar charts that make it very easy to see how the data breaks down. I'm confident that anyone who is seeking general statistics about Catawba County will find that the performance dashboard is a great place to start!"

For more information on Catawba County's performance dashboard, you may contact the County's Public Information Office at 828-465-8464 or dave@catawbacountync.gov.