

Interview with Mitchell County Commissioner Vern Grindstaff
2015 NCACC Youth Voice

By: Daniel Silver, Mitchell County 4-H member

As part of my requirement to attend the NCACC Youth Voice in 2015, I could either interview a county commissioner or take a tour of the administrative building by with the county manager. I chose to interview one of our newest commissioners, Vern Grindstaff.

I met with Mr. Grindstaff on a Saturday morning at one of Mitchell County's favorite breakfast diners called Helen's. I told him about my involvement with 4-H, and the role I play in 4-H at the county, district, and state levels. With Mr. Grindstaff being a new commissioner, I received a fresh perspective on how the commissioners work and think. We talked about the different challenges commissioners face and the hard decisions they face daily, like coming to a tough decision about a particular organization to sponsor or building or remodeling a county agency's building such as the sheriff's department, hospital, or fire department.

We also talked about different proposals the county was suggesting, like possibly adding a new EMS truck. The county was in dire need of a third EMS vehicle so they could respond to emergencies faster. Mr. Grindstaff also talked about the challenges of campaigning such as getting his name out to the public, attending all the community events and showing the county that he had what it takes to be a county commissioner. With that he gave me advice for my upcoming campaign for running for a state 4-H office and was willing to help with any challenges or questions I come across.

Article for the Blue Ridge Christian News
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In late August Mitchell County 4-H member, Daniel Silver, attended the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Youth Summit held in Pitt County. The purpose of this event is to give commissioners the opportunity to connect with the next generation of leaders and to give youth the chance to learn and become more aware of how their local government works. The summit, known as the Youth Voice, brings together 4-H Youth Development members with Boys and Girls clubs of North Carolina to participate in this annual event.

Attendants are required to complete various local government assignments, one of which is to interview a county commissioner and write a report summing what was learned. Daniel chose to interview Mitchell County Commissioner Matthew “Vern” Grindstaff. From this interview, Daniel learned what is required to become a county commissioner, what some of the hardest decisions are to make, and the everyday struggles they face.

Upon arrival at the Youth Voice, Daniel participated in a workshop entitled “True Colors” to assist participants in learning about their leadership qualities and styles in order to lead effectively. The following day began with the county delegates eating breakfast with a commissioner from their county. The rest of the morning was filled with learning about county budgets, how commissioners must make decisions about funding and budget cuts, and what it’s like to be a county commissioner. Delegates were given the chance to sit in on the official meeting of the NCACC following lunch.

Participation in this event offers delegates the opportunity to learn about local government in a real, hands-on setting with other youth from across the state. It also offers the commissioners a chance to listen to the concerns and opinions of tomorrow’s leaders.