

More than a shot: Weight loss drugs are reshaping student health, identity

College students turning to GLP-1s sparks questions on side effects, cost

Lilly Molina & Charlotte Pfabe
Elon News Network

Junior Andrew Kochman has \$1,350 sitting in his fridge. Every Tuesday, before he goes to bed, Kochman opens the fridge door and on the side finds his Wegovy shot, a weight loss medication. He lifts his shirt, injects the medication into his torso, and then discards the shot. He will repeat the same procedure next week.

Kochman is 20 years old and has been on Wegovy for about a year and a half.

“I was inspired by seeing all the stuff online about how much people are losing weight, and one of my friends from home had been on it, and she had lost a lot of weight,” he said.

Ever since elementary school, Kochman said he has struggled with his weight. He said he had tried all kinds of diets and programs like WeightWatchers, but always ended up gaining the weight back.

“I mean, I felt like I was eating nothing but dry Cheerios and plain bread and carrots,” Kochman said.

He also hated going to the gym – even calling himself “lazy.” However, in June 2024, Kochman hit a breaking point, especially when he was diagnosed as pre-diabetic. After that, he booked an appointment with his pediatrician. He said his doctor then recommended he visit a weight loss doctor, where they prescribed Kochman a 0.25 mg dose of Wegovy.

“It’s different for everyone, but for me, we gradually increased my dose once a month until we hit the peak of 2.5, and as you went up, you’re losing weight more rapidly as your appetite is going down,” he said.

Kochman said he lost 40 pounds in two months with a low appetite and minimal exercise.

The downsides of sizing down

Wegovy belongs to a class of drugs known as GLP-1 agonists. These drugs manage blood sugar levels and suppress appetite. Wegovy and another popular GLP-1 agonist, Ozempic, both contain the same active ingredient: semaglutide.

Ozempic was approved by the Food and Drug Administration for treating type 2 diabetes. The FDA approved Wegovy for people with obesity or weight-related health conditions in March 2024. Mounjaro and Zepbound are other similar drugs. Mounjaro is used for treating diabetes, while Zepbound is for people with obesity.

Professor of Physician Assistant studies Alexis Moore is a clinician by training and said it’s typically healthy for someone to lose one to two pounds per week. Moore said that in cases like Kochman’s, losing weight at a rapid pace could have resulted in muscle loss. According to Moore, most people don’t reach their maximum muscle gain until the age of 25.

However, sometimes GLP-1s don’t cause rapid weight decline. An Elon senior, who didn’t want Elon News Network to share her name due to privacy reasons, is on Zepbound and lost 40 pounds within the past year since starting weight loss

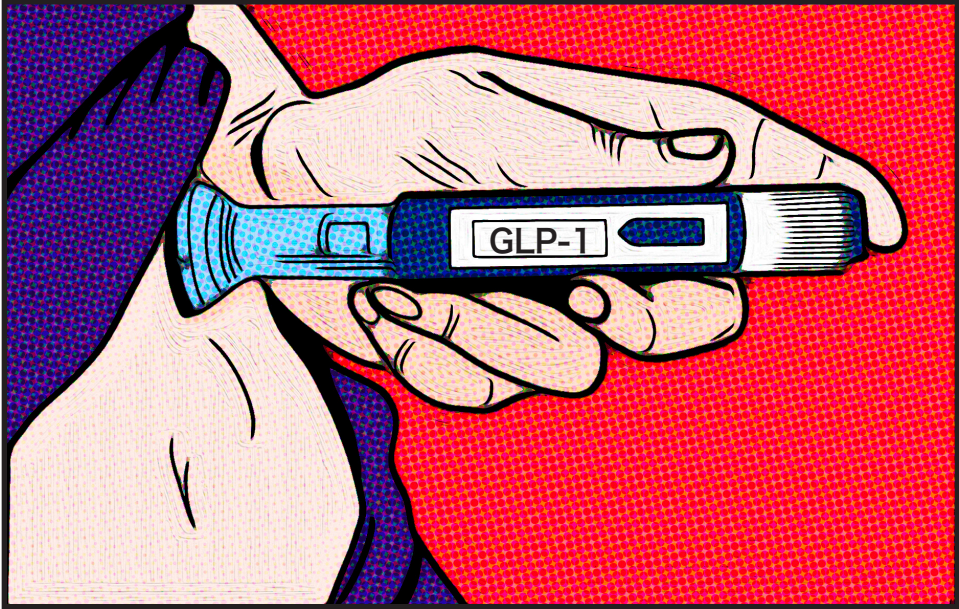


ILLUSTRATION BY REAGAN SIZEMORE

medication.

She had been overweight most of her life, but said she had hit a point where she started to feel uncomfortable in her own skin. So she went to her doctor and asked, “What do I do?” They originally recommended her Wegovy.

However, once on Wegovy, she began to feel serious side effects. The Elon senior said she would experience nausea and vomiting daily.

“I talked to one person last year who told me that she had had a similar experience throwing up on Wegovy,” she said.

Kochman said he’s also experienced vomiting while on Wegovy.

“All my friends know. They’re in the car, and I’m sitting on the side of the road puking,” Kochman said. “At some point it becomes just like, ‘Oh, there he goes again.’”



ALL MY FRIENDS KNOW. THEY’RE IN THE CAR, AND I’M SITTING ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD PUKING.

ANDREW KOCHMAN
ELON JUNIOR

Kochman said that if he knew he had eaten a bigger portion that night, it would later come back up, whether it was on the drive back or in his home. With all the puking and stomach pain, in the fall 2024, Kochman was diagnosed with a paralyzed gastrointestinal system, otherwise known as a paralyzed stomach.

“We can’t say for certain if it was the weight loss medications, but there’s a high chance that it could be,” Kochman said.

Now, Kochman takes medication — around six pills daily — to ensure that what he eats is properly digested, but he said he doesn’t see the value in stopping Wegovy. According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in March 2024, Novo Nordisk, the company that produces Ozempic, Rybelsus and Wegovy,

reported about \$21.1 billion in revenue from the GLP-1s. This made up close to two-thirds of Novo Nordisk’s total revenue in 2024.

For people without insurance, a one month supply of Wegovy or Zepbound can cost up to \$499.

President Donald Trump suggested during an Oval Office news conference Oct. 16 that he could bring down the cost of weight loss drugs to \$150 a month. However, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz said during the news conference that it wasn’t official.

The next day, stocks of Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly, which makes Mounjaro and Zepbound, fell, according to Axios.

Costco and Sam’s Club both announced earlier this month that they will be offering Wegovy and Ozempic at a lower price for people whose insurance doesn’t cover the medications. The two companies partnered with Novo Nordisk.

For Kochman, being diagnosed as prediabetic, he said his insurance covers his weight loss medication. The anonymous senior’s insurance did cover Zepbound in the past, but she said they recently told her they would not be covering the costs anymore. Now, she is going back to Wegovy.

“It just came down to me being comfortable in my own body,” she said.

The weight of perception

The anonymous senior said she doesn’t struggle finding clothes that fit her when she goes shopping anymore. She said what shocked her most was how people treated her differently once she lost the weight. For example, she found that more people held the door for her.

One area of research that assistant professor of psychology Ilyssa Soloman studies is body image.

“I use that word as sort of a neutral descriptor here. People who are perceived as ‘fat’ by others face very real prejudice in the world,” Soloman said.

Kochman said prior to losing weight, he was considered obese, one of the weight-related health conditions GLP-1s are prescribed to treat.

City of Burlington announces \$860 million deal with Food Lion parent company

Investment to fund construction of Ahold Delhaize USA distribution center in Guilford County

Alice Morrissey
Elon News Network

A new business is set to come to Guilford County and is estimated to bring 500 or more jobs to the Burlington area. Ahold Delhaize USA — a global food distribution company and parent company of companies such as Food Lion, Hannaford and Stop & Shop — will be built starting in 2026. The company is headquartered in the Netherlands; however, it has branched out to become the largest grocery retail group on the East Coast and fourth largest in the nation.

In a press conference Oct. 22, officials from both the City of Burlington and Guilford County gathered to announce the partnership with Ahold Delhaize USA. Guilford County will be home to a new Ahold Delhaize USA distribution center with a \$860 million dollar investment.

Burlington Mayor James Butler said at the press conference that he was enthusiastic about the partnership and the jobs expected to come to the area.

“There’s going to be somebody — they can provide for their family in a meaningful way. That’s going to be their first trip to Disneyland. That’s the first home that they buy,” Butler said.

Member of the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce Marvin J. Price echoed the mayor’s sentiment. He said bringing Ahold Delhaize USA — a large, international company — into the local community will benefit the region.

Guilford County Commissioner Melvin “Skip” Alston expressed his anticipation for a boost in the local economy and praised Ahold Delhaize USA for its decision to invest in the area.

“Their decision to invest here shows that this region is a place people want to be,” Alston said. “A place that people believe in.”

The center will be constructed near Rock Creek Industrial Park in eastern Guilford County, close to Lake Mackintosh along the Guilford-Alamance county line. It’s a location that Burlington City Council and Guilford county leaders have been working to improve for many years, according to Alston. During his speech at the press conference, Alston praised the Burlington City Council and former Mayor Steve Ross for having the vision to begin to invest in bettering the real estate. Under Ross, the city put \$5.6 million from the state into developing water infrastructure along Highway 61 South. State funding was used to extend the water and sewer lines to the property, with the city utilizing \$21.5 million dollars worth of COVID-19 relief funding set aside by the city council to fund future developmental projects such as this.

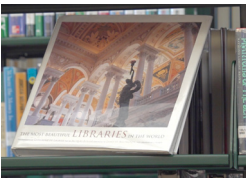
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State grant to go toward Bill Cooke Park expansion

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Library service supports homebound patrons

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Fall musical opens Oct. 31 in McCrary Theatre

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THE PENDULUM

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Executive Director of Elon News Network

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Managing Editor of The Pendulum

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CORRECTIONS

There are no corrections from the last edition of The Pendulum.



Bill Cooke Park to expand nature trail

SARAH T. MOORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The nature trail at Bill Cooke Park branches off of the park's paved multi-use trail. The nature trail is a quarter mile long, according to the City of Graham's website.



SARAH T. MOORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Gov. Josh Stein awards City of Graham more than \$300,000 toward park expansion

Fiona McAllister
Elon News Network

The City of Graham received a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant totaling \$307,725 to support the expansion of Bill Cooke Park. North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein announced that more than \$8.7 million in PARTF grants were awarded to 22 North Carolina parks and recreation projects.

Bill Cooke Park has a variety of amenities already, including three baseball fields, six tennis courts and one basketball court. The park also has one nature trail. Recreation and Parks Director for the City of Graham Brian Faucette said they plan to use the grant money to expand the nature trail.

"We'll take a larger look at what the property could hold, and again, a deeper look at what the community may want," Faucette said. "But hiking trails are going to be the immediate thing."

The nature trail expansion should be finished this winter, according to Faucette.

The grant will also reimburse the city for its December 2024 purchase of the Teer property, according to a Graham city council meeting agenda from Nov. 12, 2024. The purchase cost \$595,000 for three houses adjacent to

Bill Cooke Park totaling 12.056 acres.

According to the agenda, the purchase of the Teer property was made before the city was awarded the PARTF grant. The City of Graham was hoping to receive \$307,500 but was awarded more than expected.

Faucette said he is happy the city received this grant, especially after the long application process. He said it is important to offer Graham residents what they want to see in their community park.

"Alamance County and Graham in general has experienced a lot of residential growth over the past few years," Faucette said. "To be able to preserve the 12 acres that is directly adjacent to one of our oldest parks and most active parks is very important for us."

Tel Fehlhafer, parks and athletics facilities supervisor for the City of Graham Recreation and Parks, said receiving this grant opens up a wide variety of opportunities for Bill Cooke Park. Fehlhafer said recently there has been a higher demand for softball tournaments at the park.

"I would love to see us, somehow or another, potentially put a fourth baseball, softball field over here at Bill Cook Park," Fehlhafer said. "This would allow us to have a better tournament flow."

Fehlhafer said that with this expansion, the three houses on the property will be taken down. Fehlhafer said the City of Graham Fire Department plans to set these houses on fire for training purposes.



SARAH T. MOORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

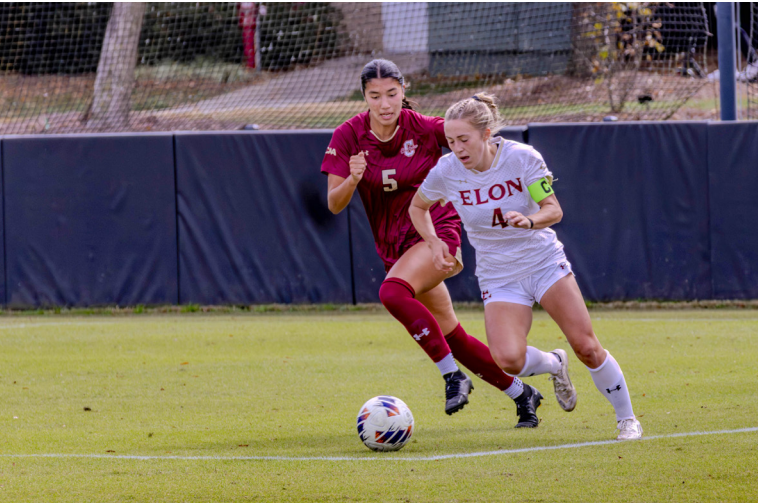
The City of Graham recieved a \$307,750 grant that will go toward Bill Cooke Park, according to Graham Recreation and Parks Director Brian Faucette.



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR
Junior Winell Henriquez performs a dance routine during Gala Latina on Oct. 24 as part of a storytelling performance showcase during the event at LaRose Student Commons. The showcase featured seven students who shared their experiences as Latine individuals through speech, dance, song and poetry.



KATRINA HOLTZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Local band plays during the annual Halloween Hoot-on-the-Farm at Buttermilk Creek Farm hosted by Altamahaw Ossipee Civitan Club on Oct. 25. Halloween Hoot-on-the-Farm was specifically created for people with autism and their families. Steve Smith, the owner of Buttermilk Creek Farm, said the event is a “no-judgment zone” of different characteristics individuals may have. “The parents tell us it’s like their state fair,” Smith said. “The kids get to come and have a great time without people staring at them.”



ALEXANDER SIEGEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
College of Charleston freshman Maderia Gwozdo and Elon University senior Ashlee Brehio fight over the ball during a soccer game Oct. 26 at Rudd Field. The match ended in a 0-0 draw.



ALEXANDER SIEGEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
A crowd gathers around Brush Truck 8 during the 100th Anniversary celebration of the Town of Elon Fire Department on Oct. 25. Town of Elon Mayor Emily Sharpe signed a proclamation Oct. 14 to designate October as Elon Fire Department Month.



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR
Sgt. Sam Kimball sorts through a bag of medicine Oct. 25 as part of an Operation Medicine Drop event at the Graham Fire Department. According to the North Carolina Office of State Fire Marshal, drug take-back events like this provide safe and responsible ways to dispose of unused or expired medications, which help prevent medication misuse, accidental poisonings and environmental contamination. Operation Medicine Drop has safely disposed of more than 422 million pills since the program’s launch in 2010 through drop boxes and take-back events across the state, according to a press release from NCOSFM.



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR
Elon volleyball players try to block a kill by North Carolina A&T on Oct. 25. The Phoenix lost all three sets against the Aggies, making the game Elon’s fourth consecutive home loss.

Students grapple with long-term risks, benefits of GLP-1s

GLP-1s | from cover

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, between 2021 and 2023, around 40% of Americans 20 years and older were considered obese. When combining the percentage of people considered obese and people considered overweight, the CDC found that a little over 73% of Americans 20 years and older are considered overweight.

The Mayo Clinic, a nonprofit medical center and research group, describes obesity as a medical problem that involves having too much body fat and increases the risk of other health diseases and health problems, such as diabetes and heart disease.



PEOPLE WHO ARE PERCEIVED AS ‘FAT’ BY OTHERS FACE VERY REAL PREJUDICE IN THE WORLD.

ILYSSA SOLOMAN
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

According to the Mayo Clinic, obesity can have a variety of causes, including genetics, physiological and environmental factors, and diet and exercise choices.

Soloman said it is easy for people to create assumptions about someone’s health if they are bigger than you. She said that “anti-fatness” stemming from this concept of willpower is one of the only prejudices to see an increase in the last decade.

Pew Research Center also found that around 65% of Americans believe willpower alone isn’t normally enough for people who are trying to lose weight and keep it off.

“I do think it raises some interesting questions about the tools that are available to people in pursuit of a particular body type, rather than in pursuit of some version of health,” Soloman said.



The CVS Pharmacy on University Drive has a card in one of its aisles advertising Ozempic, a GLP-1 injection.

Sarah T. Moore | Staff Photographer

Soloman said social media also plays a big role in people making this lifelong decision. She said social media can fill one’s feed with content that pushes a certain body type or unrealistic ideals.

“In that version of it, the way that some people might be utilizing it, is in a way that reinforces the importance of how you look,” she said.

Despite the possible psychological concerns, Solomon said it is important

to respect and not demonize someone for their decision to go on weight loss medications.

“Whatever someone decides between them and their doctor and what’s right for them is what’s right for them,” Solomon said. Though Kochman is pretty vocal about being on Wegovy, the senior said only a few close friends know that she is on Zepbound.

“It’s not something I’ll bring up in

casual conversation, usually, unless I trust a person, because there is kind of a level of judgment around it, because people think that you’re cheating,” she said.

From short-term fix to lifelong commitment

Moore said one of her main concerns is the accessibility of the GLP-1s for those who need it, such as people with diabetes.

“Is their accessibility as equal or as fair as people who don’t have diabetes, yet are able to get that medication?” Moore said.

In late 2022 and into 2023, the American Diabetes Association reported a drug shortage in GLP-1s because of the increase in demand. But the shortage ended in the spring 2024, according to the FDA.

In another study, Pew found that 53% of people who know about GLP-1s think they are good options to lose weight for people who have obesity or a weight-related health condition, but 19% think they are not good options. 28% said they’re not sure.

For people without a weight-related health condition, Pew found that 12% of respondents said GLP-1s are good options, while 62% said these drugs are not good options. 26% were unsure.

Moore said her concern with students on GLP-1s is the long-term effects.

“Once it’s approved on the market, they’ll collect data for, like, a year and that’s it,” Moore said. “Since this drug is relatively new, we don’t know the outcomes over time.”

She said as more people are prescribed GLP-1s, people will start to see how the drugs affect young people long-term.

Despite potential side effects, Kochman plans to stay on Wegovy for life.

Now 110 pounds down, Kochman said if other students are curious about weight loss medications, they should talk to their doctor. He also cautioned people about the side effects, and said if someone is seriously considering it, they should to a weight loss doctor as well.

“I’ve lived a decade feeling uncomfortable in my body, and if this is something that makes me comfortable in my body, I’m going to be loud and proud about it,” Kochman said.

New partnership brings largest investment in Burlington’s history

DEVELOPMENT | from cover

“We tighten our belts, we put it back and we said, we’re going to use this money for economic development so that it can be the gift that keeps giving,” Alston said.

The One North Carolina Fund approved a \$250,000 performance-based grant for Ahold Delhaize USA Distribution. North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein showed his support for the Burlington expansion in a press release from governor’s office. One NC assists local governments in bringing in economic development and new employment. Funds are not provided upfront — companies must first meet required job and investment goals. Additionally, all OneNC awards require matching contributions from local government partners before any funds are released.

Butler said the city is offering some of its own land to the facility, so it sits a little farther from the waters of Lake Mackintosh.

Mayor of Troutman, North Carolina, and Vice President of Government Affairs for Ahold Delhaize USA Teross Young also spoke at the press conference. Young said he was proud to be growing Ahold Delhaize’s presence in North Carolina, where the company has been present for over 65 years.

“This investment fund not only strengthened the local economy,” Young said, “but it also reflects a deep commitment to our communities that have supported families Ahold Delhaize over a decade.”



Guilford County Commissioner Melvin “Skip” Alston, Ahold Delhaize USA representative Teross Young, Greensboro Chamber of Commerce Executive Vice President of Economic Development Marvin J. Price, and Mayor of Burlington James Butler toast to the development announcement at Impact Alamance on Oct. 22.

By choosing to build the distribution center in the Burlington and Guilford County area, the project could significantly boost the local economy, according to Elon University economics professor Devon Hawkins. A major investment potentially offers a chance to expand Burlington’s taxable property base. That gives the city the opportunity to collect more revenue without raising taxes on residents. It can be expected that with a higher budget Burlington can allow better funding towards public services, such as road

infrastructure.

Hawkins compared the impact to a tidal wave, saying that as people relocate to the area or secure jobs at the distribution center, they will earn income that circulates throughout the community.

“Reality is as people live here, that income that they’re earning here at the Food Lion, or the large distribution center is going to turn into income, when they go out and buy gas and they go out and they buy their own groceries, or go to restaurants or need childcare or paying taxes,” Hawkins

said. “It becomes income taxes to the city, that would then go out to public policies or schools or infrastructure.”

However, Hawkins said that with any development with big impacts on a local economy there are potentials for negative affects as well. A spokesperson for the distributor told Fox 8 that the jobs at the facility will pay above the median income in Guilford County, which according to census data on average is about \$60,000 a year. Hawkins explained that although more people making more money is in general a good thing, it’s important for the public to be aware of the effects it may have on everyone within the community.

“We might actually see higher prices throughout the community for those that aren’t having higher income as more people are increasing the demand for scarce goods for the community. Which is in economic terms would be inflation,” Hawkins said.

Elon economics professor Mitchell Vaughn presented another view to the idea of inflation in the area.

“Some people would worry, somebody makes more money, they go out and spend a lot of money and that drives prices up,” Vaughn said. “But many of the prices are just, nationally linked. It’s not going to drive up the prices of an iPhone. The only thing it could drive up is our locality, but even then it’s, you know, you could even then argue, ‘Oh, you have a food distributor now your groceries are going to be more affordable,’ right?”

The distribution center is expected to finish construction and begin operation in 2029.

NC Republicans approve new congressional map

New map affects voters in 1st, 3rd congressional districts

Trista Panagakos
Elon News Network

The North Carolina state legislature approved a new congressional map. This change comes after the Trump administration has been pressuring Republican states to change their congressional maps to ensure Republicans continue to control Congress after the 2026 midterm elections.

In a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, North Carolina senate leader Phil Berger said, “The NCGA is ready to help Republicans secure Congress and move Donald Trump’s agenda forward.”

North Carolina is not the first state to change its map. In August, Texas Republicans altered their congressional map, making Republicans more likely to win five additional seats. In response, California Gov. Gavin Newsom requested his state legislature to change their congressional map to favor Democrats in 2026. In September, Missouri also changed its congressional map to ensure the GOP would gain an additional House seat. Multiple other states are also considering changing their congressional map.

“I’ve got bad news for Gavin Newsom and the radical left,” Rep. Brenden Jones said during the House’s session on Oct. 22. “North Carolina will not stand by while they tried to undermine the will of our voters and stacked the decks in Washington.”

Usually, states will not change their congressional maps until after a census, which happens once a decade. With Republicans trying to maintain power in Congress with a six seat majority, the plans to redistrict would allow them to pick up more seats in 2026.

The North Carolina House of Representatives voted 66-48 in favor of the new map on Oct. 22. This will affect voters in the 1st and 3rd congressional districts. Rep. Don Davis, a Democrat, is the representative for the 1st district, which he won in 2024 by less than two points. The new map would make it more likely for Republicans to gain one seat in next year’s midterm elections.

In a press release posted on his X account, Davis called the decision to change the congressional map one of the darkest moments in North Carolina history.

“Our state has prioritized passing a new congressional map that affects only our region, with the intention of predetermining the outcome of an election 377 days away,” Davis said in the post.

Davis’ office did not respond to Elon News Network’s request for comment.

Anderson Clayton, chair of the North Carolina Democrats, claimed the new map would dilute and disenfranchise Black voters in the northeastern part of North Carolina. According to Census Reporter, 39% of voters in the 1st district are Black. Even though the area of the 1st district has changed over time due to redistricting, the 1st district has had a Black representative every year since 1992.

“If you ask the average person whether or not the government is effective, they would probably tell you no,” Clayton said. “And it doesn’t help to have that happen when you see congressional maps redrawn every two years. This is the fourth time we’ve redrawn maps in five years in North Carolina, and what that means is that people feel alienated from who represents them in Congress or at a state legislative level and it means they are less connected to government.”

Rep. Rodney Pierce denounced the bill during the House’s session on Oct. 22 and said it fractures the 1st district’s primarily rural community.

“This bill redraws Congressional District 1 in a way that doesn’t just shift boundaries, it fractures communities. It pulls together counties that have little in common in geography, economy and daily life,” Pierce said. “When you do that, you dilute the voice of people who have long toiled together toward a common good.”

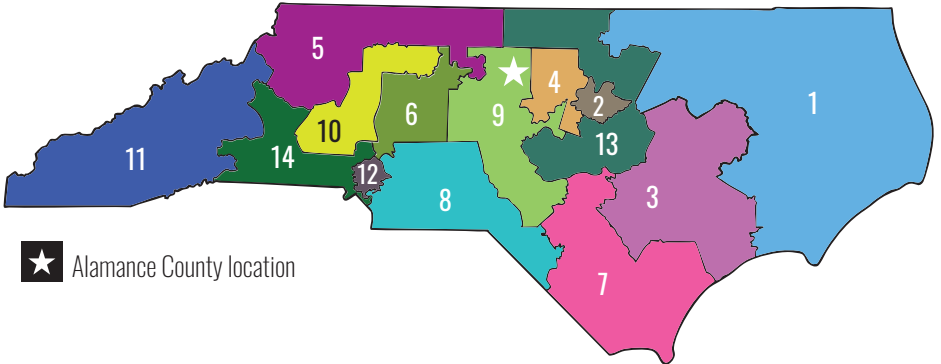
The North Carolina GOP did not respond to Elon News Network’s request for an interview.

In Texas, voting rights advocates sued to overturn the new map. In North Carolina the new map is facing similar legal challenges. According to the Public Radio for Eastern North Carolina, a preexisting lawsuit was amended to include a challenge to the newly drawn districts. The lawsuit, Williams v. Hall, focused on the alleged violation of the 14th and 15th Amendments and Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The lawsuit claims that the violations affected Black voters in the Triad area. Arguments for the lawsuit have already been made in court, but no verdict has been decided.

Clayton said the North Carolina Democrats have a long term plan to address gerrymandering in North Carolina which included reclaiming the state supreme court in 2028.

“What I do think, though, that people need to understand is that the short lived victories that they will have, will be the long term gains of the North Carolina Democratic Party,” Clayton said. “And I say that because we have been on a three step plan to take back the North Carolina State Supreme Court and also eradicate partisan and racial gerrymandering.”

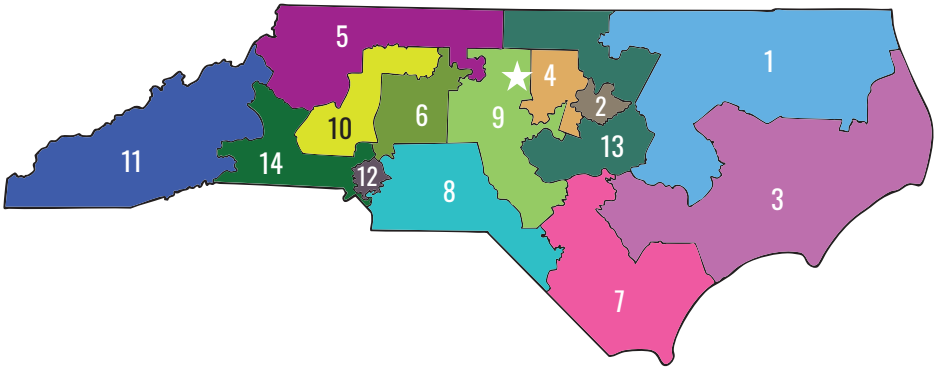
New congressional map



★ Alamance County location

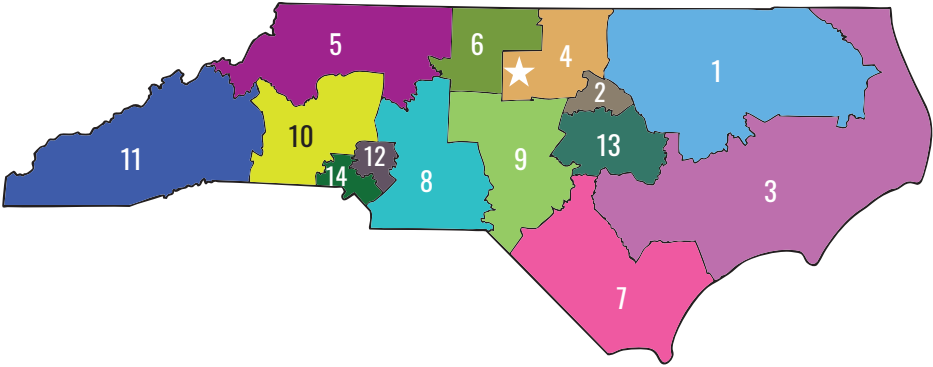
Major changes from 2024 to now:
Congressional District 1 now includes counties: Dare, Hyde, Beaufort, Craven, Carteret and Pamlico, which were all previously in Congressional District 3. Counties Wilson, Greene, Wayne and Lenoir, which were all previously a part of Congressional District 1, are now a part of Congressional District 3. This change comes after pressure from the Trump administration to redraw maps to ensure Republican control of Congress.

Congressional map used in 2024 election



Major changes from 2022 to 2024:
Congressional District 1 gained counties: Camden, Currituck, Lenoir, Wayne and part of Granville, which were previously in Congressional Districts 3 and 13. Congressional District 3 also lost part of Sampson County to Congressional District 7 and all of Wayne County to Congressional District 1, but gained the rest of Pitt County. Congressional District 1 lost Franklin County to Congressional District 13. Alamance County was a part of Congressional District 4 and was changed to be a part of Congressional District 9.

Congressional map used in 2022 election



Data from the Legislative and Congressional Redistricting page on ncleg.gov.

DESIGN BY REAGAN SIZEMORE

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Room2Grow offers support, education for young, at-risk parents

Parenting class offers judgement-free space to grow over 4 weeks

Anjolina Fantaroni
Elon News Network

In the corner of a conference room at CrossRoads Sexual Assault Response and Resource Center, Jekilah Suenu carefully places a sticker on a cup that reads, “Growing 2 Be the Best I Can Be!” Meanwhile, her mother, Brandy Daye-Suenu, prepares the room for the night’s class.

Daye-Suenu is the founder of Room2Grow, an organization that hosts educational and therapeutic classes for at-risk and young parents 16 to 30 years old.

Daye-Suenu said Room2Grow was inspired by the lack of support her own mother had while raising her.

“They didn’t have the resources to help them deal with what they were dealing with, emotionally, and understanding how to just balance being a parent and being a person in everyday living,” Daye-Suenu said.

She said she considered many names before settling on the perfect one.

“Room2Grow really means that you are willing to take that step and give yourself a chance and know that you’re worthy and just willing to be a better person,” Daye-Suenu said.

Daye-Suenu hosted her first class at CrossRoads on Feb. 7, 2024.

Daye-Suenu said she chose CrossRoads as a partner because the center promotes healing and personal growth, much like Room2Grow.

She said there are manuals for everything else in life, but parenting is something that young parents must figure out on their own. She said that’s a reason why she wants the classes to be non-judgmental and a safe space.

“I feel like we need stuff to help the big babies too, because that’s what a lot of us are that are not healed,” Daye-Suenu said. “We’re just trying to make it the best way we can and get by. And want people to understand this.”

The classes include lessons in journaling, mental health and stress management, family-friendly meal planning, and support



Room2Grow Founder Brandy Daye-Suenu sets up the room for the class Oct. 22 at CrossRoads Sexual Assault Response and Resource Center.

for parents who want to pursue higher education or receive their General Education Development certificate.

Daye-Suenu said despite the number of resources available for children in Alamance County, fewer programs actually support the parents.

“I feel like we should make a way and help them understand they’re going through the different cycles and generational curses, and help them find ways to manage everyday life and being a parent,” Daye-Suenu said.

For mother Emunah Evans, she said Room2Grow helped her find skills that helped

raise her children after being incarcerated for four and a half years.

“It helped me develop coping skills, helped me learn how to communicate with my kids better,” Evans said. “It also gave me financial literacy, also helped me with budgeting and things like that.”

Evans met Daye-Suenu while founding a program called Bonding Families, and wanted to meet someone who hosted parenting classes. Bonding Families is a program that helps justice-impacted families with connections to resources and family reunification. She said something she loves

IF YOU GO
WHEN?
5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Oct. 29, Nov. 5 and Nov. 12
WHERE?
CrossRoads Sexual Assault Response and Resource Center
1206 Vaughn Road
Burlington, NC 27217



Jekilah Suenu makes “Stepping Day by Day” cups for a Room2Grow class Oct. 22.

about the Room2Grow classes is that they don’t feel like she is sitting in a class.

“We did a lot of self-care, work on ourselves,” Evans said. “That was really interesting. She really helped me work on myself.”

Evans said something that really helped her in the classes was the teddy bear given by Daye-Suenu.

“She called it our support bear,” Evans said. “When we’re feeling stressed out or we’re feeling overwhelmed, we had the support bears to help us through that.”

Volunteer and community education coordinator at CrossRoads, Nicole Gutierrez, has seen the classes from the hosting perspective. She said that Daye-Suenu is dedicated to leading an effective class.

“She’s really committed to ensuring that her participants are getting the support that they need to be the best versions of themselves, so that they can be the best possible parents they can be,” Gutierrez said.

‘Like getting a Christmas present’: Library home delivery service keeps the pages turning for 95-year-old book lover

Volunteers deliver up to 25 items a month to homebound patrons

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

Alice Sigalos was 6-years-old when she began her “love affair” with books.

Sigalos kicked off her love of reading when she entered an ivy-covered library in Staten Island. She walked in and was told that if she could write her name, she could start taking out books.

“So I signed my name in this book, trembling, 6 years old, ‘Oh my gosh, what am I doing in this wonderful place?’” Sigalos said. “It was my refuge. I loved that place because my parents were immigrants and we had no books at home, and so I couldn’t get enough of just going into this quiet, wonderful place. It was like a fairy tale to me.”

Sigalos — now 95-years-old — lives in Brookdale Senior Living in Burlington. But that hasn’t stopped her from reading. She is one of about 135 people that use the Alamance County Public Libraries Home Delivery Service. The service delivers books and other items like CDs or DVDs from the May Memorial Library to adults who are not able to get to the library due to advanced age, long term illness or a disability, according to the program’s coordinator Storey Hinojosa.

Volunteers deliver up to 25 items to each patron once a month. Patrons fill out a form, detailing their likes and dislikes and any specific books that they may want. Hinojosa said the service is a good way to pass the time for her homebound patrons.

“In many ways, it’s a way to keep your



Alice Sigalos sits in Brookdale Senior Living’s library in Burlington. Sigalos is one of about 135 library patrons using the Alamance County Public Library Home Delivery Service.

mind busy and engaged when you aren’t able to go out and experience things the way maybe you used to be,” Hinojosa said. “This program has a volunteer coming to your house, it is also a good way to get to know them. They have someone that they get to meet with every month and get to know over time.”

Sigalos said she is grateful for the service. “This program is very near and dear to me,” Sigalos said. “It’s a wonderful thing, the outreach program, for us who can’t get there anymore.”

Sigalos has used the service for over four years and said she looks forward to it every month.

“It’s like getting a Christmas present, because the bags are red,” Sigalos said. “You

get a Christmas package every month.”

Sigalos’ 13-book delivery each month is always changing, she said. She likes a wide variety of genres, including Indian authors, Irish authors and even mysteries. She said she likes stories about people and small towns, but dislikes books about “dogs that talk.” Two of her favorites are “100 Years of Solitude” by Columbian author Gabriel García Márquez and the “Alexandria Quartet” book series by Lawrence Durrell.

Sigalos said she often doesn’t finish all of the books that are delivered to her. A book needs to get her attention in the first paragraph to get her to finish it.

Hinojosa said the program helps build relationships between its patrons and volunteers.

“It sort of builds a community within the program,” Hinojosa said. “Alice has a relationship with her volunteer. She has a relationship with me. I have a relationship with her volunteer. It’s, in a way, brought all of us together. Just her being a part of this program for so long means that we’ve all gotten to know each other in a way that’s really nice.”

Sigalos has gotten to know Storey well over the last few years and said that Storey and the volunteers do a great job.

“They’re also a wonderful group, the volunteers,” Sigalos said. “I can’t say enough about them, because they do all the work of coming with a new batch, taking the old batch, and that’s a job and they are just wonderful in doing that too.”

Sigalos has lived a life of rapid change from growing up in New York to living abroad in Venezuela and Spain under dictators such as Francisco Franco. But books remained a constant presence.

Books are very important in her life, Sigalos said.

“The whole world is in them. Anything you want to know, any place you want to go in your mind, that’s where it is. It’s in a book,” Sigalos said. “Everything you want to know in this life is in those books.”

Even while abroad, books had a steady presence in her life. While living in Spain with her husband, she once read a book to a blind woman. There was an American couple who had retired in Madrid and the woman, who was blind, was looking for someone to read Spanish novels in English. Sigalos took on the challenge. She would read a paragraph, translate it in her head and then read it out loud in English.

“

ANYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW, ANY PLACE YOU WANT TO GO IN YOUR MIND, THAT’S WHERE IT IS. IT’S IN A BOOK.

Alice Sigalos
ALAMANCE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES
HOME DELIVERY PATRON

The Home Delivery program also holds a special place in Sigalos’ life.

“At this stage of life, you grasp on to anything that you can look forward to and I look forward to that, and it’s a big thing in my life,” Sigalos said.

Fall musical explores life, art, love in Paris after WWII

‘An American in Paris’ opens Oct. 31

Elissa Leka & Sarah T. Moore
Elon News Network

Senior Gabe Tobierre said some music theatre students may describe themselves as a “dancer first,” but he is a “dancer last.”
“I could hit a little step coming into school,” Tobierre said. “But I was never really technically trained in ballet, jazz or tap.”
Now, Tobierre is playing one of the main roles in a dance-heavy show, Elon’s fall musical “An American in Paris.”

Based on the 1951 romantic comedy movie of the same name, “An American in Paris” explores the French capital through the eyes of a veteran after World War II. Elon’s production of “An American in Paris” will have seven shows from Oct. 31 to Nov. 8 in McCrary Theatre.

Tobierre plays Jerry, a suave painter and World War II veteran. He said the role personifies his personal growth as a dancer — something he’s become more comfortable with as the cast gets further along in rehearsal.

The music in “An American in Paris” was composed by George and Ira Gershwin, so Tobierre said audience members may recognize some of the songs, including “I Got Rhythm.” Music is at the core of the plot, as Adam — one of the main characters — is working on composing a piece for a ballet.

Sophomore J.T. Loveless plays Adam and said the pianist processes the world around him by channeling it into his art.
“The only way he feels like he can fully express himself and feel what he feels is through his music,” Loveless said.

Loveless said the amount of intense dance in the show requires significant trust between cast members. Loveless said the dancers were the “heartbeat” of the production.



Senior Gabe Tobierre rehearses Oct. 14 in McCrary Theatre. Tobierre plays an artist named Jerry in Elon’s fall main stage musical, “An American in Paris.” This is Tobierre’s first time performing in a main stage musical in McCrary, and he said he is excited to perform in front of an audience when the show opens Oct. 31.

SARAH T. MOORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

“It’s the first time that I’m fully collaborating with every single person on stage,” Loveless said.

Loveless said all of the roles in the show are equally important in telling the story and that he is excited for audiences to see all of their work — the culmination of the cast and crew’s trust and collaboration.

One of the main themes of “An American in Paris” is how life and art are connected. Loveless’ character Adam is a veteran who also serves as the show’s narrator. Like the other characters in the musical, Adam is learning how to use art to navigate his life after the war and his survivor’s guilt.

“I can connect with him trying to be a fully fleshed out artist, creating unique

and new work that is impactful and inspiring to other people,” Loveless said.

While Loveless himself is not Jewish, his character is. Loveless said it was important for him to connect with his Jewish castmates and learn their perspectives on the character and the musical.

To prepare for the show, Loveless said members of the cast got to meet a Holocaust survivor and hear her story. Loveless said her story was tragic and hard to hear, but he was grateful for the opportunity to connect with her and learn from a Holocaust survivor directly.

“Her perspective was not only inspiring, but it was so informative, because for somebody like me — who

isn’t Jewish at all — having a hands-on, personal experience with somebody who could tell us their entire story was really, really, really helpful,” Loveless said.

Embracing the show’s themes around guilt, tragedy and the role of art in one’s life are only part of what Tobierre said makes this such an ambitious show. Beyond the themes of the musical, the performance has complex moving pieces, intricate dance numbers and thoughtful character performances.

Tobierre said the core message of the show asks the audience to reflect on the role art plays in their lives.

“What is art? What is love? And what does it mean to devote yourself to something that you’re passionate about?” Tobierre said.

While Tobierre, Loveless and the cast know the show well, what they don’t know is how people will respond to it. Tobierre said he is looking forward to hearing the audience laugh and go “whoa” at different parts of the show, and for the audience to see the team’s hard work.

“It has been a lot of blood, sweat and tears from the entire creative team, cast and everything,” Tobierre said. “It’s been a labor of love for sure.”

IF YOU GO

WHEN?
7:30 p.m. Oct. 31, Nov. 1, Nov. 6, Nov. 7 and Nov. 8
2 p.m. Nov. 2 and Nov. 8

WHERE?
McCrary Theatre, Center for the Arts

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