

**FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**  
by Dr. Barry Harding  
Public Schools of Robeson County



If you have a child in school or have had a child in school, there's a good chance that, at some time or another, you've had the occasion to be in contact with a school counselor. Certainly your child has. Working in the system's guidance and counseling program, these 57 counselors employed by the Public Schools of Robeson County provide important benefits to individual students by addressing their intellectual, emotional, social and psychological needs. They accomplish that in several different ways. Sometimes it's on a one-on-one basis, in groups or in classroom settings helping them to acquire competencies in career planning and exploration, knowledge of themselves and others and educational and vocational development. We make an effort to devote as much attention as possible to all of our students.

The approach to counseling varies according to the grade level at our various schools. In elementary school, for example, the effort is directed toward assisting students in learning the skills and attitudes necessary to be successful. The emphasis is on the development of decision-making skills and beginning the exploration of future educational and occupational possibilities. Interestingly enough, some of this actually is begun in the kindergarten. In middle school, guidance and counseling efforts focus on the needs of pre- and young adolescents with programs begun in elementary school adjusted to fit the special needs of middle school students. At this point, counselors work with students and parents to develop a four-year plan covering graduation requirements with students' interests and educational and occupational plans taken into account. This Four-Year Academic Plan should be signed by the student's parent and may be revised

as needed each year.

Guidance and counseling in high school helps students develop plans for a fulfilling life based on understanding themselves, their needs, interests and skills. Counselors help students review and update the four-year plan developed in middle school according to students post graduation educational and occupational needs. They continue to help students develop skills in decision-making, career-planning, working with others and taking responsibility for their own behavior. Our counselors work with all students, parents, teachers, administrators and the community through a program of various services. Among them are included crisis counseling, consultation on student behavior for parents, teachers and administrators, and business and industry visitation. There is much more that our counselors do which space limitations don't allow us to discuss here but, suffice it to say, their contributions to the education and well-being of our students cannot be overstated.

In a wedding ceremony, usually the maid of honor carries the same bouquet as the bridesmaids.

**Seniors need affordable prescription drugs, Weinstein says**

**RALEIGH**— With prescription drug costs on the rise, North Carolina must take steps to make medicine more affordable for senior citizens, Sen. David Weinstein said today. "Medicine costs are soaring—especially for senior citizens, many of whom are on fixed incomes," said Weinstein, D-Robeson. "We need to make sure they can afford the medicine they need to stay healthy." Senate leaders are working on a plan to make prescription drugs more affordable for seniors, the fastest-growing population group in the state. By the year 2025, senior citizens will make up more than 21 percent of North Carolina's population. In the past 10 years, Americans past age 65 have seen their medicine costs double, and those costs are expected to double again in the next decade. Last year, beneficiaries of Medicare—which generally does not cover prescription drugs—spent close to \$1,400 on medicine. A 1997 survey of more than 600 N.C. seniors found that many older adults faced with high medicine costs balance their checkbooks by

taking steps that conflict with their doctor's orders. About 44 percent of those surveyed said they take less medicine than prescribed, only take medicine when they are in pain, or buy only the drugs that they think are most important. "Seniors who are faced with skyrocketing medicine costs often try to make ends meet by taking steps that could jeopardize their own health and well-being," Weinstein said. The Senate took steps last year to help seniors with medicine costs, including doubling the funding for a program to make prescription drugs more affordable for low-income seniors with heart disease or diabetes, and approving a study on providing a prescription drug program for all senior citizens in North Carolina. "Our current prescription drug program is a good start, but we must do more to ensure that our seniors can afford the medicine they need," Weinstein said. "Too many senior citizens are forced to choose between empty cupboards and empty medicine bottles. That's not much of a choice."

**Parkton Third Grader Wins Youth Art Month Flag Award**

Dillon Matthews, a third grade student at Parkton Elementary School, has been selected as the Robeson County 2001 Youth Art Month State Flag even winner. His art work was chosen from over 800 entries from across the state. There were only 17 winners in North Carolina. Dillon will be accompanied to Washington on March 1st by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Kittrell, his art teacher, Ms. Nancy Johnson, his classroom teacher, Ms. Andrea Velente, and Assistant Principal Deena Revels for a reception and formal ceremony honoring the student flag designers in the Rayburn House Office Building. The theme for National Youth Art Month is "School Flags Across the United States".

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