

Community Calendar

Treadway Reunion

The family of the late Elmer and Julia Treadway will hold a reunion on July 15 at noon at Doe Branch. All family members are asked to bring along both lunch and dinner. For more information, contact Frances Treadway Goforth at 649-3922.

McDevitt Reunion

A family reunion for members of the family of the late Shufford and Cindy McDevitt is planned for July 8 at noon at Paint Creek. Those attending the reunion are asked to bring lunch and inform all family members. For more information, contact Mary Goforth or Betty Gosnell.

Retired Teachers Meet

Retired Madison County school personnel will meet on July 11 at Mary's Restaurant on the Marshall Bypass at 11:30 a.m. All retired school personnel are invited to attend.

Hot Springs July 4

The Hot Springs Lions Club will sponsor July 4 activities in Hot Springs beginning at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday. Activities will include bingo, a fish fry beginning at 4 p.m., dart throwing, a dunking booth and fireworks display at 9 p.m.

Proceeds from the events will be used to benefit the visually handicapped.

SBI Enters Ponder Probe

The State Bureau of Investigation has been called in to conduct an in-depth investigation of the circumstances surrounding the purchase of a 19.5-acre tract of land by Department of Transportation board member Zeno Ponder. The SBI investigation was requested last week by both 24th District Attorney James T.

Rusher and Wake County DA Randolph Riley. Gov. Jim Hunt appointed both Rusher and Riley to conduct a study of the land purchase to determine if Ponder had violated state law when he purchased the property along Sweetwater Rd. in Sept. of 1982. State law prohibits DOT board members from engaging in real estate transactions with the state.

In announcing the request for the SBI probe, Rusher told reporters, "We've been hearing a lot of reports concerning Mr. Ponder's purchase, but we really haven't gotten to the facts. We need to determine the facts of the transaction, and then we can deal with it." No date has been set for the SBI report.

Documents on file with the Madison County Register of

Deeds office reveal that Ponder paid off a \$26,000 note on the property on June 20.

Ponder attended the Monday night meeting of the county commissioners in Marshall. When asked about the SBI investigation, Ponder told The News Record, "I'm not losing any sleep over it." Ponder has maintained that the investigation over the land purchase was instigated by political opponents.

Banks Named NCAE Head

Cecil S. Banks, a 37-year-old Greensboro social studies teacher, has assumed the presidency of the North Carolina Association of Educators with a pledge that the Association will "cooperate fully with other educational groups in the push to improve North Carolina's public schools."

Banks, an outstanding teacher and expert in American government, succeeds Mrs. Frances M. Cummings, a Lumberton teacher, at the helm of the 43,000-member NCAE. He will serve a one-year term as president and will be on leave-of-absence to work out of the Raleigh headquarters of the Association.

Banks will spend his first week in office attending the convention of the National Education Association in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"A new era is dawning for public education, and I am pleased that I can occupy a key role as that era begins," Banks said. He said the action of the North Carolina General Assembly in approving more than \$260 million in new money for public education "is symptomatic of the consensus that has developed among North Carolina citizens about public school."

Banks said the people "clearly want their public schools improved, are quite willing to pay the cost of those improvements, and are saying loudly and clearly that they want schools in North Carolina that will provide an education second to none for their children."

Banks said his presidency will be marked by cooperation with the leaders of other educational groups, a cooperation he said is "essen-

tial if we are to achieve the progress that all educational groups desire." He said he also will press for more of an instructional thrust from the NCAE since he believes teachers want their organization to not only look after their economic well being but also help them become better teachers.

Banks, a Jones County native and a graduate of East Carolina University, holds the master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The great blue heron stands four feet tall and has a wingspan of more than six feet, yet weighs only five to eight pounds, National Geographic notes.

All food contains some water; about five percent in a fresh almond to about 80 percent in a potato. The watermelon, which contains 97 percent water, contains more water than any other food according to National Wildlife magazine.

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Unemployment Declines

Both the North Carolina and Madison County unemployment picture brightened during May according to statistics released last week by the North Carolina Employment Security Commission (ESC).

Figures released last week show that joblessness in North Carolina reached a four-year low in May when the statewide unemployment rate reached 5.8 percent of the workforce. The May statewide unemployment rate was the lowest recorded since April, 1980. Statewide, employment increased half a percentage point during the month, up from the 6.3 percent unemployment rate reported in April of this year.

Madison County unemployment also decreased during the month, dropping to 5.1 percent of the workforce from April's reading of 5.8 percent. The national unemployment rate during the month of May stood at 7.2 percent according to the ESC figures.

ESC chairman Glenn Jernigan noted that the state's workforce exceeded three million workers for the first time in May, with 2.84 million members of the workforce actively employed during the month. Both figures represent all-time highs according to Jernigan. The ESC chairman reported that some 41,600 jobs were created during the month.

Most of the gains have been reported in electrical machinery, non-electrical machinery and furniture fixtures. Gains were also reported in the trade and construction industries.

The average weekly hours worked by production workers during May was down slightly to 40.1 hours. Average hourly earnings remained unchanged at \$6.97.

Madison County's 5.1 percent unemployment figure represents some 420 unemployed workers in a workforce of 8,220.

Neighboring counties continue to report higher unemployment figures. Buncombe County reported a jobless rate of 5.7 percent in May, while Haywood and Yancey counties reported rates of 8.7 and 9.3 percent respectively.

Wake County continues to have the lowest jobless rate in the state with 2.9 percent and Swain County reports the state's highest percentage of unemployed at 14.5 percent.

School Absences Show Decline

By STEVE FERGUSON

Absences in the Marshall Elementary School were down seven out of nine school months this year compared to last, according to principal Fred Haynie.

This amounts to over 500 student days, Haynie said, and is due to a new policy enacted by the Madison County Board of Education in July of 1983.

The policy, which was enacted on a one-year trial basis, stated that students at Marshall Elementary must attend at least 160 of 180 school days, and that any absences over the 20 allowed must be made up in summer school.

Marshall Elementary was formed in August of 1982 when grades K-3 were placed in the new Marshall Primary School on the Marshall bypass. Last year, the school had no absence policy.

The new policy has caused

students to become more aware of their missed days, and to become very careful when their absences near the 20-day mark, Haynie said.

"I think it's been successful and I think we'll see an improvement in attendance next year if the (school) board approves it again," Haynie said. People in the community have also been very supportive of the new policy, he said.

Those who go over the 20-day limit are required to attend summer school. Each day is a three-hour session, 9 a.m. until noon, and each session makes up for one day missed. Haynie said several students were attending summer school due to missing school during the regular year, but most of those students missed less days this year.

Haynie said he feels

(Continued on Page 5)

Ronnie Rigby
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