

Energy fraud cases being eyed by DSS

By Ed Miller

Out of 154 applications taken by the Department of Social Services (DSS) for emergency crisis energy funds, 10 are being held pending a review on possible fraud charges.

The investigation was prompted when applicants falsely claimed they had no fuel for the coming winter, and were given "crisis" assistance, a DSS spokesman said. "Ten cases out of 154 is too high a percentage," Hoke County DSS Director Ken Witherspoon said last week.

"The Department of Social Services is taking a hard stance on

misrepresentation of need for crisis funds," Witherspoon said.

According to the DSS director, there are two types of energy assistance presently operating in the county.

Applications for low income energy assistance money are being taken at the Driver License Examiner's building just off Prospect Avenue.

Emergency crisis fund applications are also handled at the same location, but these are two different types of assistance.

The emergency crisis funds are those being misrepresented right

now, said Witherspoon.

Persons requesting the funds must be completely out of heating fuel, said Witherspoon.

When DSS finds that a person qualifies on paper, the oil company or gas supplier is called and fuel is taken to the home.

About 100 gallons of oil is normally authorized by the service, said Witherspoon.

Already this year, there have been cases where the oil company was called and asked to deliver fuel to area homes.

Upon filling the tanks, it was found that some 120 gallon tanks

would only hold 50 gallons of fuel.

The oil company knows the sizes of the tanks it must service, said Witherspoon.

The persons requesting the assistance misrepresented the situation because they signed papers saying they were completely out of fuel.

"That constitutes fraud," Witherspoon said.

Checking out the applicants in question will not be a matter routine, said the director.

There will have to be an investigation, he said.

Witherspoon has stopped taking

applications for those emergency crisis funds until the cases suspected of fraud have been cleared up.

The local DSS is expected to begin taking applications again on December 1, said the director.

There is \$25,000 in the crisis fund and when that money is gone, the program is over, said Witherspoon.

There have also been some cases reported in the county of possible abuse to energy assistance funds.

Cases of people receiving energy assistance checks and cashing them without paying fuel bills were

reported several times last year.

"There is nothing that says people cannot do that, said Witherspoon.

Assistance money does not have to be designated toward energy, said a spokesperson for N.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

"All people who get checks have heating expenses," said Kay Fields of the Assistance Payment Section of the N.C. DNR.

"We have found that this (check) (See CRISIS, page 10A)



Just a few dabs

With a little paint and a wig, this carnival goer will look like a clown. Face painting was just one of the many activities during Saturday night's TMH

Halloween Carnival held at Upchurch School. The event earned over \$2,800 for the summer TMH program.

Hoke clients probed for food stamp fraud

By Ed Miller

The Hoke County Department of Social Services (DSS) is currently investigating 37 cases of suspected food stamp fraud, members of the DSS Board were told Monday.

Although there are over 4,600 persons who are currently receiving food stamps in Hoke County, a disproportionate amount of time must be spent by local DSS staff members investigating fraud, Food Stamp Coordinator Judy Locklear told the board.

There are 1,363 households in Hoke County now served by food stamps, Locklear said.

The program serves 4,600 people with about \$171,099 in food

stamps per month, and about 50% of Locklear's time is spent handling food stamp fraud, she said.

According to Locklear, most of these persons are now being caught because of the new computerized food stamp applications.

All applicants must fill out forms and those forms are keyed into the computer, she said.

In the past, a major type of food stamp fraud was "dual participation."

That is when a person applies for food stamps in Hoke County and then goes to Scotland or Robeson counties and applies there too, she said.

Those persons are being caught

now because, if they use the same social security number they used elsewhere, it will show up on the computer.

In the past, many people who were on food stamps were also working, said Locklear.

The DSS computers are now capable of being hooked up to social security memory banks and if people worked under the same number given for food stamps, they are caught.

Locklear will be working with these cases to make sure DSS gets back food stamp money that was misrepresented.

Presently, DSS can recap all losses on fraud.

Nephew charged with shooting

By Ed Miller

A McCain area man was wounded last week after being shot by his nephew.

Kenneth David Harris, of Rt. 3, Raeford, was arrested on a warrant last Friday charging him with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill after he allegedly shot

his uncle Fredwin L. Harris, according to a report filed Monday by Hoke County Sheriff's Detective Ed Harris.

Kenneth Harris, 20, was out of jail on \$5,000 bond after being released Saturday, records at the Hoke County Jail show.

Fredwin L. Harris, also of Rt. 3,

Raeford, was taken to Moore County Memorial Hospital where he was interviewed by the Hoke County detective.

According to the report, Fredwin and several other people were sitting out in front of his mother's

(See NEPHEW, page 11A)

Raeford man receives 10 years for offenses

By Ed Miller

Ten years in the North Carolina Department of Corrections was given to a Raeford man, after he was found guilty in Hoke County Superior Court last week of numerous offenses, ranging from drug possession to breaking and entering.

John (Yogi) Bradley Gordon, 24, was found guilty of possession

of marijuana, possession of diazepam, possession of house breaking tools and numerous counts of breaking, entering and larceny, Superior Court records show.

Gordon, who was arrested June 23 on the possession of marijuana and possession of the "anti-anxiety drug" diazepam was found guilty and given one year on those charges.

The charge of possession of housebreaking implements got Gordon another three years, according to records.

When arrested on that charge, Gordon had a 21 inch pruning saw, a claw hammer, a "dark chaser" lantern and a 13 and one half inch screwdriver, records say.

According to a warrant issued to Raeford Police Detective James

Murdock, the tools were used by Gordon to break into Raeford business Fashions Unlimited.

On felonious breaking, entering and larceny charges stemming from robberies at Fashions Unlimited, Universal Marketing, Inc. and The Little Whale Restaurant, Gordon got two more three year sentences, records say.

According to sheriff and police reports filed at the times of the robberies, \$8,888.20 worth of guns, knives and ammunition was taken from Universal Marketing and over \$1,317 in food stuffs were taken from The Little Waale.

Gordon had also been charged with and was found guilty of breaking, entering and larceny into an unoccupied house belonging to

Elsie McNeill.

Over \$68 in fixtures were taken from the house and Gordon was sentenced to three more years for the crime, records say.

Because two of the sentences were deemed by Superior Court Judge D.B. Herring, to run concurrently, Gordon faces a maximum of 10 years in prison, a spokesperson for the Hoke County Clerk of Courts office said.

Around Town

By Sam Morris

The weather is still like summertime and according to reports, we are due more of the same for this week.

Be sure to vote Tuesday, November 6. If you don't then please be silent about the affairs of our nation, state and country.

Several years ago Robert Gatlin asked me to go with him to the dedication of Cameron Home, situated on land between Vass and Cameron. Robert was a trustee of the Baptist Children's Home, which operates this home. The land that was donated by a distant relative of mine was owned originally by my great-great grandfather.

I hadn't heard much about the place recently until Gatlin brought me the following article out of (See AROUND, page 10A)



Choice

Hoke County voters will have an opportunity Tuesday to do a part in shaping the local school system, as well as the political and economic future of the nation. We take a look at the choices in today's Section B of The New Journal.

School board hearing case

Members of the Hoke County Board of Education were sequestered behind closed doors Monday and Tuesday to hear evidence in a case involving the firing of a former county Teacher of the Year.

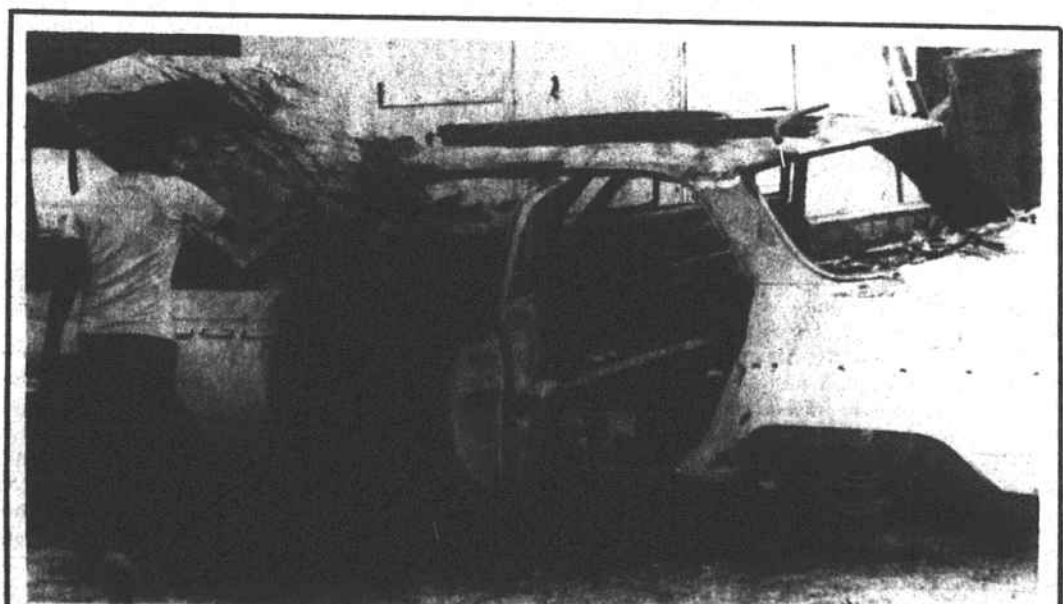
Prosecution testimony concluded Monday night after a 10-hour session in the contract hearing for West Hoke teacher Ethelyn Baker.

The hearing, which is being held in the board room of the Department of Education building on Wooley Street, is expected to conclude on Wednesday.

An arbitrating review panel earlier recommended unanimously that Baker, who was the Hoke County Teacher of the Year in 1982, be rehired and returned to her West Hoke classroom.

Baker is being represented by Charlotte attorney Yvonne Evans.

The Board of Education's lawyer is Martin Erwin of Raleigh.



Hot morning

Creole Wiggins looks over the scene after the Hillcrest Fire Department responded to a burning car in the Scurlock area Monday. Wiggins is walking toward her husband's old Buick. According to

Wiggins, she was lying across her bed when she smelled smoke. One fireman was heard to say that the fire had to have been set. "Don't ask me how it caught fire. I don't know," Wiggins said.