

# The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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## This week



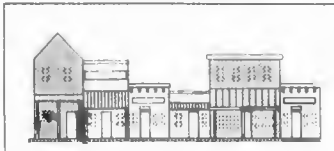
Confederate soldier's  
monument is moved  
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Habitat For  
Humanity again  
breaks ground  
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## Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS  
Contributing Editor

Many people that I talked with Sunday and Monday were happy about the rain. As I write this column Monday morning we have had about an inch of rain in Raeford over the weekend. It is still cloudy and the forecast calls for showers this afternoon and Tuesday. So far there haven't been any power failures in Raeford or trees blown down. It has happened in other parts of the state. We should be thankful.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the high Wednesday to be in the 70s and the low in the 50s. Thursday highs will be in the 80s and the low in the 60s. Friday and Saturday the highs will be in the 90s and the lows in the 60s. There isn't any rain in the forecast.

Last week I had an item about the death of veterans in 1999. Since then Tom Squier, Hoke County Veterans Service Officer, has been told of the deaths of two additional vets. They are Paul Saunders and Leonard Dunn. If anyone has been missed, call me or Tom Squier.

Tom also told me that The Veterans Office on East Elwood Avenue was a drop-off point for aluminum cans. The funds from the sale of these cans will go to the Habitat for Humanity organization of Raeford/Hoke County.

(See AROUND, page 9A)

## Commission kills plan to build offices

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

The new \$2.5 million Hoke County Administrative Facility is history. Hoke Commissioners voted Monday night to

cease construction and will not enter into an "installment purchase contract" for the project on West Palmer Road. After the board nixed the building, it received an ovation from more than 150 citizens opposed to the office complex moving out

of downtown Raeford.

Commissioner L.E. McLaughlin led the move initially to delay it after the public hearing, then amended his intent to "deny completely" the county office project. McLaughlin, backed by Com-

missioner Cleo Bratcher Jr. and a deciding vote from Commissioner Charles V. Daniels, who previously voted in favor of the complex, carried the majority vote to cancel the building plans.

(See OFFICES, page 11A)



## Hoke High School Class of 2000 graduates Friday

Despite heat in the 90s, 238 Hoke High School seniors walked across a stage (top) erected on the school's football field Friday evening and received diplomas.

The ceremony included short speeches from school principal Dr. Barry Wall; the class's Valedictorian, Jason Hop; Salutatorian, Rebecca Tatum; and class president, Todd Galberth. The school's band played "Pomp and Circumstance" as seniors marched onto the field (left).



## 2 Hoke teens die in Robeson wreck Two boys remain hospitalized, one in critical condition

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Residents of a Robeson County neighborhood where a fatal crash occurred attempted to help the five teenagers who were involved in the accident Thursday afternoon. Two died and two others are still hospitalized, one in critical condition.

Alex Brent Williams, a 16-year-old Hoke High junior, of 126 Hickman Court, and Nico Marshall, 16, of 116 Hickman Court, who attended Hoke High until November 1999, both died at the scene.

One passenger, Hoke High junior football player David Tho-

mas, of Overton Road, remains in critical condition at Cape Fear

Valley Medical Center, and 17-

(See WRECK, page 11A)



Scene of a Robeson County accident which killed two Hoke High students last week. (Photo by Pat Allen Wilson)

## Mystery still surrounds Holmes' death, preliminary report indicates drowning

The preliminary results of an autopsy on Michael Angelo Holmes, the 33-year-old Vass Roadman whose body was found in a pond off June Johnson Road, indicate he died of drowning.

His wrecked car was found the evening of Saturday, May 20, about 600 yards from the pond; the body was found by campers six days later.

Dr. Karen Chancellor of the state Medical Examiner's office said the final results of the autopsy will not be made available to the public for 60 days, and she could not release information on Holmes' time of death.

SBI Special Agent Janie Pinkston said yesterday she had spoken with the medical examiner and more tests are being con-

ducted. Holmes' body was partially in the water when found. Pinkston said it has not been determined yet if his body was found at the same place in which Holmes had entered the water.

"It's my understanding no one who found him touched him or moved him" prior to the (See MYSTERY, page 10A)



## Hospice Golf Tournament drop-in

Skydivers from Raeford Skydiving dropped in at the annual Hospice Golf Tournament Friday at Bayonet Golf Course. The tournament was the course's largest ever, attracting approximately 180 golfers. Winners were Tony Thacker, Lenn Taylor, Glen Bangs and Harry Sanders. In second place were Doobie Leach, Don Porter, Bill Smith and Charles Crowder.

## Council okays Raeford budget

By KRISTIN GUTHRIE  
Staff writer

Raeford City Council members voted Monday night to accept the 2000/2001 budget with no tax increases, hikes on water and sewer rates or any other significant fee increases for services the City offers. The tax rate will remain at \$.47 per \$100 valuation, while still providing a 3.5

percent cost-of-living increase for all employees.

In an unrelated item of business, the councilmen gave permission to City Manager Mike McNeill and City Attorney William Fields to negotiate a contract with A&R Railroad. A&R Railroad has agreed to give the city the right away on a section of railroad property in exchange (See CITY BUDGET, page 9A)

## County pares budget to eliminate increase Employee COLA increases nixed

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Hoke Commissioners sent a concise message to taxpayers on Monday night, eliminating any worry about taxes being increased when the new budget officially begins July 1. The recommended budget is approximately \$19.6 million, an estimated increase of nearly \$4.4 million above the past year's budget. Taxes are proposed to

remain the same at 74 cents per \$100 property valuation.

"The board has decided not to raise any taxes," Commission Chairman James Leach said. "This board has stated there will not be a tax increase in that (2000-2001) budget." Leach repeated.

Leach's promise was a preliminary budget presentation by County Manager Bernice McPhatter, regarding expenditures targeted for the next (See COUNTY, page 10A)



Democrat head Charlotte Kelly, front, reads a prepared statement calling for party unity.

## Democratic party head calls for unity, cites 'divisive tactics'

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

Charlotte Kelly, chairperson of the Hoke County Democrats, called for party unity in the county at a press conference held last week.

"I want to strongly encourage Hoke County Democrats to remain loyal to the party and elect Democrats on the local, state and national level in the fall," Kelly said in a prepared statement.

"It is important that we show unity. Where there is unity, there is strength," she said.

Kelly said she does not encourage switching parties purposely to divide the community. "If we are Democrats, let us be Democrats and remain united."

A release announcing the press conference — attended by representatives of two Hoke publications — stated that divisive tactics have been employed in the county's politics "which threaten successful elections in the fall."

Unaffiliated candidates are vying in the general election for the offices of county commissioner and register of deeds. Kelly stated, "This is a ploy that took shape during the highly contested and racially divisive Hoke County sheriff's race of 1998. While the offices sought are different and the races of the unaffiliated challengers are different, the ploy is still the same."

Evidence of the racial division was obvious at the Hoke Democratic convention held in April which was attended by only six whites.

Kelly announced a unification rally scheduled for August 26 at East Hoke Middle School. Democratic primary winners statewide are scheduled to attend as well as the N.C. Democratic Party leadership.

There was no question and answer session following the press conference which took place on the courthouse steps at 12:30 p.m. Friday.