

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

The warm weather has returned and finally the rain came to Raeford and Hoke County. Last week the rainfall was from one and a half to two inches in the county. We were lucky in that no tornadoes came with the rain. We did have some high winds but the only damage was downed limbs and pine cones. Maybe the seasonal weather will continue for some time.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the high Wednesday to be in the 90s and the low around 70. Thursday, Friday and Saturday the highs will be in the 80s and the lows in the 60s. There could be showers on Wednesday and Thursday.

Last week I had an item in this column about the book written by Tom Brokaw. A part of the sentence read "Most of us were called into the service in 1946." The 1946 was incorrect, it should have been 1940.

I left here with the National Guard Unit in September, 1940 and returned from overseas in December 1945. My discharge papers read February 1946.

The reason for this correction is that the date was a topic of discussion at one of the morning coffee tables.

Raz Autry was by the house
(See AROUND, page 10A)

County proposes no tax increase

Officials say schools can't operate with cuts

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

County Manager Bernice McPhatter announced during her annual financial presentation there is no tax increase for Hoke property owners next year in the proposed \$20.9 million budget. However, county water rates will go up from a

minimum charge of \$11 to \$12.50. An indignant board of education also squared off with county commissioners to dispute "alarming" cutbacks proposed for Hoke's school system.

McPhatter indicated a "very conservative" budget was unavoidable. It requires teamwork to overcome challenges that will be faced next year, she said.

"Decisions made by Gov. Easley to hold state share revenue payments indefinitely and reduce other revenue sources have affected my proposed budget for 2001-2002," McPhatter said. "Loss of revenue, limited additional revenue sources and little increase with assessed property valuations are factors that influenced my proposed budget."

In spite of a state deficit that will affect Hoke's revenues, the budget proposal re-

flected a 3 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) that will be dispensed to county employees without any lay-offs required.

Hoke Schools represents one of the hardest hit departments impacted by budget reductions. Hoke School Superintendent Mitch Tyler, School Board member Russell Smith and Hoke finance officer Carolyn Olivarez protested commission- (See COUNTY BUDGET, page 9A)



Hoke County's March for Jesus down Main Street coincided with the national event Saturday. The event included performances on the Library Stage (below). See related story and more photos on page 1B.



Holly Park residents seek to block construction of low-income apartments

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Some 30 residents of Holly Park presented a petition to city councilmen Monday night in which they stated objections to the planned building of multi-family housing at the end of Southern Avenue, which is adjacent to the subdivision.

Listed as the reasons for the objection are excessive traffic caused by nearby industry and medical complexes; existing low income units with a through street exiting through the subdivision; and possible flooding problems.

Covington Avenue resident Betty Webb was the spokesperson for a small group of Holly Park residents who appeared before the city council.

Speaking of subsidized housing complexes, Webb said, "We already have Lantern Lane and Yarkin Trail... Police are called to Lantern Lane because of (See APARTMENTS, page 6A)



Boy Scouts Troop 440 and Venture Club 441 were thanked by the Raeford Centennial Committee at Monday night's city council meeting for painting a mural on the old Raeford Hotel for Raeford's 100th birthday celebration. Here Vail Li of Venture Club 411 accepts his thank you from Grace McDonald, chairman of the centennial committee.

Prosecutor drops charges against parents of dead child

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The parents of a child who died last year from heat stroke while trapped in his family's car will not be prosecuted. Citing a lack of substantial evidence, District Attorney Kristy McMillan Newton last Friday withdrew involuntary manslaughter and child neglect felony charges against Ryan Lee McKinley, 29, a U.S.

Army soldier stationed at Fort Bragg, and Karen McKinley, 34. The couple were suspected of being responsible for the death of their two-year-old son, Zachary McKinley.

Newton indicated there was not adequate proof to demonstrate criminal intent by the McKinleys. The McKinleys declined to comment on their being released from the criminal allegations.

"The state cannot meet its burden of proving that

Zachary's death resulted from a criminal act by a person possessing the requisite criminal intent," Newton said. "Based on the information acquired during the investigation of this case, it has been determined that there is insufficient evidence to warrant criminal prosecution of the McKinleys for the death of their son."

"The responsibility of the District Attorney and the Hoke County Sheriff's Office is to determine if there is (See CHARGES DROPPED, page 8A)

Hoke's storm-readiness rewarded by weather service

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke County's Emergency Management is not looking for a repeat of Hurricane Floyd, but as hurricane season approaches, Director Al Schwarzbher said Hoke is "StormReady" for any weather-related disaster. In an effort to prevent property damage and to protect lives, Hoke was recently recognized as the first of 31 counties in the central disaster region to become certified by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Distinguished by the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management in the new "StormReady" program, Hoke is also one of only seven counties in the state to achieve the status.

"In a weather disaster what usually makes the difference between life and death is the action of the individual, but every county, home, business, school and other places need a plan, and that is why Hoke County's Emergency Management is exemplary," said George Lemons of the National Weather Service in Raleigh, a partner agency in the (See STORMREADY, page 8A)



Shown from left, are Hoke Communications Director Ron Fairbanks, Raeford City Manager Mike McNeill, County Commissioner Charles V. Daniels, Emergency Management Director Al Schwarzbher, County Manager Bernice McPhatter and George Lemons, director of the National Weather Service warning program.