

The News-Journal

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50¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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Governor to request legislature fully fund low wealth formula

Hoke School Board seeks separate \$300 million to assist at-risk students in low wealth counties

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Educators in wealthier counties such as Wake praise high ABC accountability testing scores attained by its students, while Raleigh attorney Bob Spearman, legal counsel for Hoke's Board of Education, continues to ex-

plain in the Wake County Superior Court why Hoke at-risk students are more likely to fail academically.

It is a legal battle forged by Hoke and four other low wealth counties for ten years for all children to receive a sound basic education. Won by Hoke in the State Supreme Court, the Supreme Court

justices' decision reverted to the lower court of Wake Superior Court Judge Howard Manning. He must determine resource and funding needs that should be appropriated by the state.

The state Department of Public Instruction estimates there are more than 300,000 disadvantaged students in North

Carolina in danger of not receiving a sound basic education who may be in need of special assistance, extra tutoring, and counseling.

Manning, presiding in sequel hearings two weeks ago, wants to know why the state is still dragging its feet in funding programs for these at-risk stu-

dents to receive a sound basic education required by the state constitution. After recently hearing legal arguments from Hoke and the State Attorney General's office, Manning has still not issued a ruling.

(See LOW WEALTH, page 5A)

Launder resigns

Steps down after being ousted as Parks & Rec head

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke Parks and Recreation director Holly Launder resigned last Thursday, saying that she was "shocked" County Manager Mike Wood demoted her without any warning.

This, despite her years volunteering to help the youth of the county to play sports and serving almost one year as interim and then full-time Parks & Rec director.

"His action was humiliating and it was degrading to me," Launder said on Monday. "There had never been any reprimand in my file by Mr. Wood, and he had never complained to me about my job performance."

Launder, a Raeford resident, tendered her resignation six days after her demotion. Wood chose new athletic director Jose Yopez to replace Launder. Relocating from Durham County, Yopez was employed on the job for less than three weeks when Wood informed Launder that Yopez would become the department supervisor instead of her.

(See RESIGNS, page 6A)



Maddison on a roll

Maddison Branch was a guest at the White House for Easter. Maddison attended the Easter egg roll on the White House lawn and she and her grandmother, Brenda Branch, and aunt, Shelly Branch Secoy were guests at a breakfast reception in the White House. Lawn activities were a little wet, but Maddison said her favorite activity was the magic show.



Rep. Garland Pierce, former 82nd Airborne paratrooper, tries on a parachute harness with the help of Hoke attorney William Moses, left, and Commissioner Charlie Daniels.

This Week

SunPath has grand opening

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Raeford Mayor John McNeill welcomed SunPath Contracting USA, a military parachute container and harness manufacturing firm, to Raeford at the multi-million dollar company's grand opening in the former Spanco building on Monday.

"Thank you again for moving into our city limits," McNeill said. "You have done a good job of remodeling."

"We hope to form a long relationship with Sun Path."

Operating with a three-year lease at the local facility, SPC owners Derek and Pat Thomas have hired 33 people whose jobs were salvaged from another plant they were previously operating with a partner on Doc Brown Road.

"These are all people who helped us in the first venture and now the second time around," Derek Thomas said. "Thanks to Hoke Economic Developer Don Porter and Congressman Robin Hayes for their

"All the people in Hoke County have been absolutely great to us... We want them to see us grow." SunPath co-owner Derek Thomas

support," Thomas added. "All the people in Hoke County have been absolutely great to us."

"Our employees have helped us a great deal to make this building operational and to get the place ready. They painted the walls and worked really hard even when it was cold and freezing."

Thomas said his firm is looking forward to "a great relationship" with the employees and with the city. "We want them to see us grow," he added.

Filling numerous military contracts, the Thomases eventually hope to hire 94 employees to keep up the demand for the parachute equipment.

(See GRAND OPENING, page 5A)



Children of the Depression gather page 2B

Hoke Indian receives scholarship page 3A

Sheriff's cookout draws 1200 page 3A page 1B

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Lawyers group wants schools to again change calendar

Schools may have to change schedule to reflect lawyers', officials worry calendar won't have 180 days

BY SHIRLEY U. GEST
Intern

The Hoke County School Board will be asked at a special meeting Friday to again rework the school calendar. This time,

however, the board may have no choice in the decision.

A group of attorneys known as Lawyers International Advancing Restructured Schools plans to force a new schedule on schools statewide, but because the

famous Leandro case made Hoke nationally known, the group plans to start here. It is prepared to take its clout to court to enforce the plan.

"We're trying to create a uniform calendar nationwide," spokeswoman Ama Lance-

Chason said. "This isn't just schools, but for municipalities, organizations - everyone. There's too much confusion about when to take off. But we're going to start with the schools."

(See JACKSON HOUSE, page 2A)



A 3,500 square foot house, which will be surrounded by a brick wall, is being built on North Main Street by pop star Michael Jackson.

Michael Jackson builds house here

Main Street home to be used to escape publicity

BY SHIRLEY U. GEST
Intern

Pop star Michael Jackson, currently embroiled in a controversial California trial, is building a house on Main Street in Raeford.

It's being dubbed the "Nevermind Ranch" by workers who have already erected the shell of the building on the lot where the old Cameron house burned.

A Jackson spokesman says the house will be used only on occasions when the singer is performing nearby. "Well, actually,

it will be used also when he wants to escape," says Pantson Fiyer. "Wrong choice of words," he added.

Fiyer says the Jackson family had hoped to be in the house by the first of April - in time for the US Open in Pinehurst. But he says the house should be completed in about six weeks. Once the building is completed, a pool will be installed and a large brick wall erected around the perimeter of the property.

"We liked Raeford because it's in the (See JACKSON HOUSE, page 2A)