

The News-Journal

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50¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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Local educators press for more state funding

Teachers, principals say they want to teach 'whole student' not just improve

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Some Hoke educators are complaining of unfunded federal mandates requiring more certified classroom teachers in stark contrast to the spiraling trend by

North Carolina's legislature to spend less on education. Principals such as Stacy Stewart at West Hoke Elementary School say they are feeling the pinch to improve students' proficiency without adequate financial resources.

The Education Data Partnership, a

national organization, issued an analysis on trends in public education across the nation in March. The study revealed that in the last 20 years less than one in three students has demonstrated proficiency in reading and mathematics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

The nonprofit partnership also revealed that only 68 percent of America's public school students would graduate from high school.

A report issued by The Urban Institute also reported that Hispanic and African American high school students have

little more than a 50 percent chance of finishing high school with a traditional diploma, according to TEDP officials.

The partnership recommended that educators and policy makers examine the relationship between spending (See EDUCATORS, page 7A)

State lags in education funding says forum

Public Forum calls for state to honor Leandro ruling

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A six-month study conducted by the Public School Forum sends a stern message to educational policymakers that North Carolina slid from 36th place to 40th, ranking as one of the states with the lowest per pupil spending in the nation. PSF urged the state to find a "silver bullet" solution to increase educational funding and to establish a comprehensive educational plan not currently in place.

"Funding is absolutely the key," Tina Miller, Hoke's assistant school superintendent of curriculum and instruction, said. "You cannot hire certified teachers if funding is not available, and you cannot reduce class size. It is important to keep classes as small as possible when you teach at-risk students."

"Hoke is doing the best we can with the money we

receive, but we could do even more if we could tap into more financial resources for our students."

North Carolina's expenditures for education represent an alarming gap of \$1,384 per student compared to the national average, according to officials at the Public School Forum. Falling at a steady rate, North Carolina's ranking in spending could not be increased without the legislature appropriating \$1.88 billion more to equal the national average. Neighboring Virginia spends \$7,832 and South Carolina spends \$7,724 per child in expenditures compared to North Carolina at \$6,635 per child.

Miller indicated the state's decline in funding education compared to other states creates a more significant disparity for low wealth counties such as Hoke.

"This lack of funding on a state level defi-

(See STATE LAGS, page 5A)



Aurora Knox, 20 months, leaves the Hoke Expo last Wednesday with a wagon load of goodies. She was at the annual Chamber of Commerce-sponsored event that showcases area businesses and agencies with mom Kelly Knox. Aurora's father is Boucher Knox.

This Week



ChoralFest 2005
brings music
of the heart
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Child abuse awareness
events set
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on their way
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USDA inspectors close turkey plant

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

House of Raeford's Central Avenue poultry processing plant was shut down by U.S. Dept. of Agriculture inspectors Saturday because of conditions that could lead to bacteria contamination, said USDA spokesperson Matt

Baun of the Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Baun said a comprehensive food safety assessment at the plant was begun in January and concluded at the end of March.

"That inspection turned up a number of food safety concerns and we needed to act on (See TURKEY PLANT, page 4A)

Board clashes on raise given to 911 head

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The reclassification of an employee last month sparked a controversy after the Hoke commissioners meeting on Monday evening. Commissioner Bill Cameron and

Commission Vice Chairman Charles V. Daniels discovered that 911 Communications Director Jimmy Stewart was given a re-grade classification last month above the maximum step of 13 on the pay scale without their knowledge.

Even though Stewart may have deserved

a raise, they say, they are upset because he was singled out while other employees — also in the same situation — were not considered for salary increases at the same time.

However, County Manager Mike Wood and Commission Chairman Bobby

Wright denied that the board did not know of the pending raise. They said the entire board was aware that Stewart was to receive a raise. Commissioners James Leach did not return a phone inquiry on the subject and calls to Jean Powell's (See BOARD CLASHES, page 7A)

Stoneybrook running is this weekend

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Described as an event not to be missed, the annual Stoneybrook Steeplechase opens this weekend at Five Points with

plenty of fodder for the horses and fun for families.

Thoroughbred steeds will be kicking up the turf and try to "jump the moon" at the fifth running of this steeplechase in Hoke County on Saturday as they attempt to clear

hurdles almost five-foot high in the oblong course. At least 60 of the finest horses and jockeys will compete in the racing event at the Carolina Horse Park. The event is expected to draw up to 15,000 spectators. (See STONEYBROOK, page 5A)



Old hotel now set to fall April 29

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

The Wilmington firm that will take down the former Raeford Hotel is to be on the site April 20, according to City Manager Richard Douglas.

D.H. Griffin Wrecking Company will begin removal of the asbestos from the building's interior, and the material will be taken to a hazardous waste site.

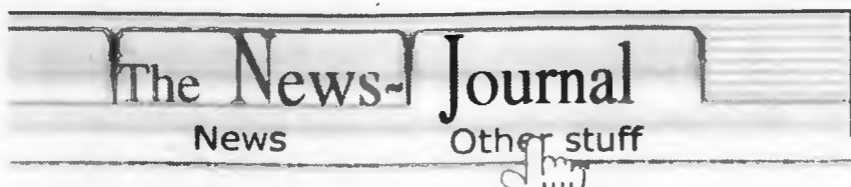
On April 29, workers are scheduled to demolish the building, an operation that is expected to take two days. Traffic will be detoured during those two days,

Douglas said. City employees are currently building a wall around the sidewalk for safety purposes.

The wrecking company, established in 1959, is being paid \$280,000 by the city to bring down the building at Main Street and Central Avenue.

The city obtained the Raeford Hotel, once known as The Blumont, in October 1999 after its owners faced foreclosure. The three-story hotel with 42 rooms first opened in March 1927 and has been vacant for many years.

(See HOTEL, page 8A)



By KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

Before we returned to Mexico on a house building expedition, I had been determined to learn enough Spanish to at least communicate with the children and the foremen at the worksites.

When the foreman would say, "This wall is about as straight as the Rio Grande River," I wanted to be able to apologize and start tearing down block before the

cemento hardened.

When the children cracked a confetti-filled Easter egg over my head I wanted to be able to quote the Wizard of Oz witch: "I'll get you, my pretty. And your little dog too!"

Helpful friends loaned me gradeschool Spanish books. I tried an online Spanish course. A couple of teenage friends even snuck into my office and labeled everything with stickers.

(See OTHER STUFF, page 6A)