

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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## Salaries Not The Only Issue In Nursing Plan

Up-front money is only one consideration in the Brunswick County Board of Health's proposal to restructure the health department's nursing program.

While most of the board's discussion last week centered around paying for a plan to add a few nurses, hire a director of nursing and give raises to those already on board, little was said about what the community as a whole has to lose when nursing programs aren't given a chance to fulfill their mandates.

The local health department is experiencing difficulty recruiting and retaining nurses, a situation far from unique. All over the state and country, rural areas are experiencing a shortage of all types of public health professionals, including nurses. Rural communities suffered dreadfully as urban hospitals and wealthy private health care systems upped the ante to shore up their own nursing programs. In a trend that is just now starting to level off, large hospitals have been forced to provide high wages and creative benefits to attract and keep qualified nurses. Rural public health departments have simply not been in a position to compete.

Meanwhile, numerous state and federal programs have been created in an effort to curb social ills such as North Carolina's deplorable infant mortality rate. The backbone of many of those programs is the same as that of hospitals and other health care systems—nurses. The setting for them is the local level.

The most disturbing result of that coincidence is what gets left undone or given short shrift.

One example Health Director Michael Rhodes used was maternity care coordination, a term familiar to public health personnel but, unfortunately, not to the public as a whole. While maternity care coordination costs money up front, it saves over the long haul. It is based on putting public health nurses out in the field to follow high-risk patients such as unwed teenagers, and to work with other agencies to see that maternity patients of the health department get the kind of health care they need to deliver healthy, full-term babies without costly developmental problems. Its premise is that several hundred dollars worth of intensive, well-coordinated prenatal services in the short run makes more sense than waiting for a sickly "million-dollar-baby" is born—a baby who is likely to remain at the public trough indefinitely.

But nurses can't be in the field and in the clinic at the same time. When one nurse is doing the work of two, effective maternity care coordination and other types of outreach and community-based prevention remain nothing more than good intentions.

Paying nurses more and using them more efficiently might be a thorny problem in the short run, but you don't have to look far down the road to see a much bigger and costlier ill.

## Good Ethics Policies Can Keep Temptation At Arm's Length

Other Brunswick County towns would do well to follow the Holden Beach Board of Commissioners' lead and adopt ethics policies for elected and appointed town officials and employees.

Though, as one commissioner said, the move isn't likely to shape the town, it gives citizens at least a modicum of protection against being kept in the dark when someone representing them stands to gain personally from actions taken on the town's behalf.

In small communities such as ours, with less-than-diverse economies, it is nearly impossible for elected officials and their agents to avoid having to take stands that involve or affect their livelihoods. That in itself is not an unhealthy situation. In communities where tourism or fishing or retailing are the primary means of making a living, those interests deserve strong representation, and voters traditionally are willing to provide it.

Inherent in that struggle to balance representation is the opportunity for abuse of power and the temptation to serve self above citizens. The people of all our towns deserve some tangible means of keeping that temptation at arm's length. Ethics policies, thoughtfully constructed and fairly applied, can help do that.

# Let's Build On Libraries' Possibilities

Sunday afternoon I watched the cornerstones being laid for two new Brunswick County Libraries.

Looking at the orderly layers of block rising from those two concrete slabs, it made me glad to think of all the children who will soon have wonderful new places to explore the world of books.

Looking at the small crowds of people who gathered at each site, it made me sad to think of all the adults who grew up here without such an opportunity.

It would be difficult to find a single action by a board of commissioners that will have a more lasting positive impact on the future of this area than the allocation of \$1.5 million to begin building a county library system.

While I cherish the tiny branch libraries we have now and salute the staff members who do their best with what they've got, the fact is, Brunswick County's neglect of these most valuable resources is appalling.

How can we possibly expect our educational system to improve if we don't provide the means for children to improve themselves? They need places to explore learning on their own. Places where they can ask themselves questions, find the answers, and then explore the new questions that each new answer raises.

That's what libraries are for. To educate. Not in the garbage-in, garbage-out routine of teaching and

Eric Carlson



testing. But in the classical sense of the word, as the ancient Romans defined it: "educare" (to lead out).

The best teacher isn't the one who fills a child's head with facts. It's the one who nurtures a questioning mind. Good schools teach children what they need to get by. Libraries challenge them to find out more.

Like the man said, if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach him to fish and he'll be fed for a lifetime.

When this initial library construction project is completed next spring, Brunswick County will see new branches at Leland and Oak Island. Then the Shallotte and Southport branches will be expanded and renovated.

Edith Tillman of Leland and Anne Hines of Yaupon Beach will be remembered as the local heroes who rallied support for new branch libraries in their communities. Through their grassroots fundraising efforts, these two women and their allies were prepared to build new

libraries with or without county support.

Former Commissioner Gene Pinkerton deserves special recognition for proposing the idea of a four-branch county library system that built upon those private efforts.

Then, as the first chairman of the Brunswick County Library Board, Pinkerton set a unifying tone for its deliberations and insisted that "all four children" be treated as equals.

The present board of commissioners should be commended for quickly rejecting an incomprehensibly misguided attempt to disband the library board and to delay the project's funding. But their work is just beginning.

Next spring at budget time, as the new libraries open and the old ones get their facelift, it will be up to this board to seize a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Because this project should never be considered finished.

First we need to equip the libraries (dress our four children) in a way that prepares them for the 21st century. We need to forget how libraries used be and imagine what they are destined to become.

This means spending the money for a state-of-the-art computer system and a transportation program to make the four small branches into one large library. A reader in Southport should be able to find a book on a computer terminal and find out which branch has it. The library system should be able to move

books from one branch to another for next-day pickup.

That may sound expensive, but consider the savings on books. Except for basic reference collections and extremely popular volumes, there would be no need to duplicate book purchases. Most library users would happily sacrifice immediate access if they had four times as many books from which to choose.

We should also explore the possibilities of keeping our entire reference collection on computer database. Why purchase multiple sets of bulky, expensive encyclopedias that will outdated in a few years when we can create a computer reference system that takes up a fraction of the space and which can easily be updated?

Such a system would give each library simultaneous access to a much broader selection of reference materials. Eventual connections with the state library would make even more information available.

Teachers across Brunswick County could have access to all those materials without leaving the classroom. It would even be possible for anyone in the county to use library references at home or work through a telephone modem and personal computer.

The potential is there. The cornerstones have been laid for Brunswick County to enter the information age. It's up to us to build on the possibilities.



## Jordan Could Help Fight Teenage Violence

I lost interest in organized sports 26 years ago, the day I learned the moms in the neighborhood coffee klatch had decided I was too old at 13 to play backyard football with the boys.

Oh, I went to all the high school sporting events, even was chosen by my classmates to be a junior varsity cheerleader one year, a task I approached with the obligatory zeal. But my enthusiasm was really only for the attention and the cute uniform. I didn't have a clue what was happening on the field.

My high-school boyfriend was a three-sport letterman, co-captain of the football team and star of the hoops squad. I think I pretended rather convincingly to pay attention at his games. But, in my heart of hearts, I remained hopelessly indifferent.

Then came college in the early '70s, days when politics command-

ed more of students' attention than athletics, at least at my school, re-

Lynn Carlson



moving peer pressure as a threat to the spirit-impaired. I didn't attend a single sporting event in my four years there, save one evening when a blind date took me to watch a randy bunch of British sailors beat, quite literally, the University of South Carolina rugby team.

All this is to serve a something of a disclaimer as I try to back my way into writing about Michael Jordan. I

admit I have never seen him play basketball except for those slam-dunks on his cereal commercials. The truth be known, I'm better acquainted with him as a Hanes underwear model than as basketball mega-star.

However, one would have to have been vacationing off the planet for the past couple of months not to have learned something about, and felt something for, this extraordinarily handsome, talented and much-loved athlete.

I don't have anything to say about Jordan's retirement, being qualified to speculate about neither the machinations of professional sporting organizations nor the motivations of men and women whose life's work is playing for millions. Except this: I'd like to see him devote himself to convincing some of those adolescents who adore and envy him to change their violent ways.

Though I certainly don't know what part the murder of James Jordan played in the retirement of Michael Jordan, some things are obvious even to those of us who pay no attention to what happens on the court.

A young boy from Wilmington achieved the dream of a lifetime, drawing fame and riches far beyond what he must have ever imagined as a child. When that kind of thing happens to you, you must come to feel truly blessed, like one of the chosen ones.

That must make it hurt doubly bad when you lose someone you love in an act of senseless violence, knowing there's not much else in your life that you couldn't replace. That must make the lesson extra bitter that no one is really safe anymore—that simply being in public can be deadly these days, even here in the boonies of southeastern North Carolina.

As I saw the children being interviewed for network television news about Michael Jordan's retirement, I was touched at his impact on them—girls and boys, tots to teens, all races.

And I thought about how too many kids live these days, carrying guns, running in packs like stray dogs, thinking little if anything about shooting their peers, their elders and whoever happens to be in the way—all for leather jackets, sneakers, cellular phones, money, crack cocaine or the heck of it.

Kids like that gave up listening to Mama a long time ago, assuming she ever had anything to say in the first place. And the only time they're going to hear what a police officer is saying is after they've already been busted, when it's way too late.

Some of them might listen to Michael Jordan, though. He's lived the dream and he's living the nightmare, with as much to gain as he has to give.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## New Senior Legislator 'Just Kidding' About Living Too Long

To the editor:

I submit this as a measure of self-defense from the verbal assaults already received consequential to your typically excellently written article (Oct. 7 issue) concerning my appointment as Brunswick County delegate to the newly created Senior Tar-Heel Legislature.

Those assaults, typified by such as: "Speak for yourself!"; "Whose side are you on!"; and even, "You must be nuts!" stem from the accurately reported quote, "We're all living too long..." a comment inspired by an incorrigible inclination to inject feeble attempts at humor into earnest encounters.

Shucks, folks, I was only kidding! I surely do not wish to alienate you or my brother in his 90th year, my sister in her mid-80s; or even my "kid-brother," just turned 75. I as-

pire to 100, together with my beloved spouse.

I do seriously regard the extensive growth of our mostly non-productive population relative to the working population as a condition with potentially disastrous social consequences, and one which must be addressed with greater emphasis than seems apparent now; but I would not want to anticipate any "final solution" under the aegis of (another) federal cabinet-level department headed by Dr. Jack Kevorkian.

(On the other hand, do you realize the immensity of deficit-eliminating, debt-reducing savings that would result from the elimination of any 80-plus population?) Oops! There I go again!

One clarification: I did not work "40 years with the State of New York as a bureau director." While I

was a career employee for the State of New York for 40 years, only the last nine were as a bureau director.

Joe Ferlauto  
 Ocean Isle Beach

### Questions Quarry Plan

To the editor:

As a retired heavy truck sales engineer, I am writing to express some concerns relative to the Martin Marietta mining operation. Having lived in an area of Maryland near a stone pit mine, I would question the impact of this operation in the following areas:

■ Has an independent survey been made to insure the area to be mined contains no asbestos or other substances detrimental to the environment?

■ Has an independent survey been made regarding the water

table?

■ Has a survey been made concerning the damage to the highways regarding 60 to 120 trips per day by trucks weighing 65,000 to 75,000 pounds? The surface of N.C. 211 is already rolled-up by normal traffic east of Midway Road. This stretch of highway, over a swamp area, is not handling current normal traffic without some road damage.

■ Has thought been given to windshield and front end damage to be incurred by private motor vehicles, this caused by loose material falling from dump trucks?

■ Has thought been given to the increase in the accident ratio, which will be caused by private auto operators passing trucks on two-lane roads?

■ Has thought been given to moving the product by rail?

I trust the above points will be carefully considered during decisions in this matter.

W.E. Baumann  
 Bolivia

### Write Us

We welcome your letters to the editor. Letters must include your address and telephone number. (This information is for verification purposes only; we will not publish your street/mailling address or phone number.) Letters must be typed or written legibly. Address letters to:

The Brunswick Beacon  
 P.O. Box 2558  
 Shallotte NC 28459  
 Anonymous letters will not be published.