

Brunswick Has Lowest Dropout Rate Of County School Systems In Region

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County Schools held on to one of the lowest dropout rates in Southeastern North Carolina during the 1992-93 school year.

Using a U.S. Department of Education formula, the system's dropout rate fell from 1.94 percent in 1991-92 to 1.09 percent in 1992-93. While student enrollment rose slightly, the number of students who dropped out of grades seven through 12 fell by two from 79 to 77.

Across the region, Brunswick County posted the second-lowest dropout rate of any local school system, and the lowest of any countywide system.

Whiteville City Schools had a 1.74 percent dropout rate, up from .79 percent the year before. Other area county systems had rates as follows: Columbus, 4.16; Duplin, 2.79; Bladen, 3.87; Pender, 2.77; Onslow, 2.70; and New Hanover, 4.05. Of those, the dropout rates improved from one year to the next in Pender, Bladen and Duplin as well as Brunswick.

Statewide, 63 of 120 local school systems reported higher dropout rates in 1992-93 than during the previous year, a trend reflected in a slight

overall increase in dropouts statewide.

In 1992-93, the total number of students in grades seven through 12 who dropped out of school was 17,639, up slightly from 17,190 in 1991-92 when 17,190 students dropped out. The dropout rate increased slightly, from 3.39 percent to 3.44 percent.

During the 1992-93 school year, however, there was an increase in enrollment statewide of more than 5,000 students in those grades.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Bob Etheridge said the numbers are still too high, though he believes they show North Carolina's efforts to keep students in school are working.

The dropout numbers are down substantially from 1988-89, when 24,559 students in grades seven through 12 dropped out of school.

Local school systems and the state department have focused on keeping students in school as North Carolina and the Southeast have historically had high numbers of dropouts.

The Basic Education Program (BEP), approved by state legislators in 1985, provides nearly \$30 million each year for local systems to spend on

dropout prevention efforts.

Using BEP and other funding sources, Brunswick County has a battery of programs in place in grades kindergarten through 12 as part of its dropout prevention effort coordinated by Anne Mitchell. These include behavior improvement programs, early identification of high-risk students with intervention, peer helper and peer tutor programs, after-school and in-school tutorials, a mobile remedial education project, and flexible high school schedules and a Job Partnership Training Act program that allow students to work and go to school.

The school system also emphasizes in-school alternatives for discipline and attendance problems, trying to reduce the number of students who drop out after receiving repeated out-of-school suspensions.

Dropout rates for systems and individual schools are part of the annual state "report card" used by the Department of Public Instruction to evaluate school performance. School systems are expected to show continued improvement from year to year.

ISSUE TO BE DECIDED FIRST OF '94

Holden Commissioners To Consider Rezoning

After the holiday dust settles, Holden Beach Commissioners will start the new year with a real "hot potato" of an issue.

When the town board meets Jan. 3, it will decide whether to uphold a planning board ruling or go against the advisory panel and rezone several lots near town hall from residential to commercial.

In November, the planning board denied the rezoning request of Alan Holden and John Q. Holden. They asked that one oceanfront lot and property on the unopened portion of Rothschild Street north of the town recycling center be rezoned from R-1 to C-1.

The Holdens appealed the planning board ruling, and commissioners will make the final decision on the rezoning request following a public hearing scheduled Jan. 3 at 7 p.m.

Alan Holden owns the four lots located at 119, 121, 123 and 125 Rothschild. A half-acre tract north of 125 Rothschild and a lot at 135 Ocean Boulevard West is owned by John Q. Holden.

At their Nov. 22 meeting, the Holden Beach Planning and Zoning

Board voted to deny both rezoning requests.

Board members John Craig Jr. and Harold Steorts did not vote on Alan Holden's request, but their silence was counted as a vote in favor of the denial. Steorts also did not vote on John Q. Holden's request.

"We pretty much followed public opinion at the meeting, the land use plan survey and rulings in the past on commercial rezoning," Planning Board Chairman Roger Williams said of the decision.

A survey of property owners conducted nearly four years ago in conjunction with the latest update of the Holden Beach Land Use Plan indicated that people were concerned about density of development.

At the time, 75 percent of the people who responded said they agreed with the existing commercial zoning pattern and 66 percent said they thought there was no other land suitable for commercial development on the island.

Eleven percent of the respondents said there was more land suitable for commercial use near the bridge and town hall.

Town Manager Gus Ulrich said

commissioners will have the final say on the rezoning request. It cannot be appealed past the board of commissioners.

Ulrich said the Holdens have not indicated if they have plans to develop the property if the zoning is changed to commercial.



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Campus Gets Clean Sweep

Nursing student Shandi Medlin was among the sprinkling of students who joined staff and faculty for "spruce up" day Friday on Brunswick Community College's main campus near Supply. Volunteers drew from a "job jar" for tasks that ranged from scrubbing floors to removing leaves in work areas partitioned by Curtis Workman, director of physical plant.

Interagency Program Gives Cantata In Student Center

Students and faculty of the Brunswick Interagency Program (BIP) presented a Christmas cantata, "Bless That Wonderful Name," and nativity drama Dec. 16 to family and friends in the Brunswick Community College Student Center.

Choir participants were students Amelia Bayne, Tracy Bordeaux, Cathy Fulwood, Harold Jones, Michelle Lewis, John Singleton and Deon Smith; and staff members Margaret Benton, Debbie Bryant, Tamera LeGette and Joyce Munn. Also singing were Rosanne Jones and Christey Warren of Life Inc.

The drama featured Timothy Russ as Joseph, Mary Holmes as Mary, Anthony Patrick, angel; Henry Harris, innkeeper; Terry Prince, shep-

herd; and Richard Abarno, wiseman.

Filling out the cast in non-speaking roles were Wayne Boyd, Claire Carus and Leon Walker, innkeepers; Andrew Carr, Kelly Humphrey, Brian McMillian, David Roberts, Robert Stanley, Jimmy Strickland, Kelvin Williams and Dennis Wilson, shepherds; Trina Bland, Lisa Hicks and Jennifer Puma, angels; Thomas Armstrong and Danny Wright, wisemen; and Danny Wright, Rhonda Bellamy, Beverly Criswell and Janet Hussain, townspeople of Bethlehem.

Joy Knotts was music director and Shelia Spencer, drama director. Richard Hiel was narrator, Harold Varnum, sound and video producer, and Shirley Freeman, drama assistant.



Season's Greetings

Hearty good wishes from all of us to all of you... We wish you the very merriest of yuletides.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR BUSINESS
Columbus Cold Storage
Whiteville

Merry Christmas

A very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from our employees and their families to you and yours.

CP&L
VISITORS CENTER
Brunswick Nuclear Plant, Southport, NC

It's A Time For Love

Sharing, caring, giving...
an art at Christmas
that comes from the heart.

First Investors
SAVINGS BANK

Shallotte • Leland • Whiteville

Santa's list is nearly done;
his elves have all been busy.

He'll load his sleigh and then fly off at heights that make us dizzy.

Hope Santa Brings You all
Your Favorite Things!

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

A time to love.
A time to share.
A time for peace.
A time for care.

May this Christmas fill you
with all the glory of the season!

COASTAL PARTS

109 Shallotte Ave. • Shallotte • 754-4902

Peace

May your holidays
be blessed with
an abundance of
Health, Happiness
and Hope.

Kirk R. Steptoe, MD

Internal Medicine
and Staff