



A Gift Of Reassurance

Local N.C. Highway Patrol troopers accept armloads of teddy bears provided by State Farm Insurance. Each trooper keeps a couple of the stuffed toys in their patrol cars to give to children for reassurance in frightening situations such as motor vehicle accidents. Pictured are Trooper Roy Murray, Trooper J.H. Kerr, Dwight Flanagan of the local State Farm office, and Trooper Jerry Dove.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

West Brunswick Checks Lagging Attendance With Policy Change

BY SUSAN USHER

West Brunswick High School took steps last week to shore up slipping attendance rates by reducing the number of allowed student absences and getting tougher on Saturday school make-up days.

With the start of the spring semester on Jan. 24, students will be allowed three absences during each nine-week grading period instead of four.

That means that after the third absence, a student must attend "Saturday school"—a special half-day session held on Saturday—on the day assigned, or receive an automatic grade of 68 in each class missed. The grade will continue to drop five points for each additional absence that has not been made up at the end of the grading period.

The salvage effort became necessary when a policy instituted in the fall didn't work as planned.

West Brunswick started the school year allowing students up to four absences during each nine-week grading period, or a total of 16 absences over the year that a student is not required to make up, said special services teacher Mary Medlin, a member of the school attendance committee.

Students have an opportunity to make up absences above that limit, and work missed as a result, by attending Saturday make-up sessions. A student who doesn't make up the extra absences risks failing his

grade, or if a senior, not receiving a diploma, though an appeals process is available.

At West it changed a 1992-93 policy that had cut allowed absences to 10 accumulated over the entire year. The absences were not rationed across grading periods and students had until the end of the year to make up excessive absences.

"What we think happened (this year) is that they saw 16 days and thought they could accumulate them over the course of the year again," said Medlin.

This year students cannot wait until April or May to make up missed school days. They are expected to make up absences each grading period, as part of an effort to make Saturday school more "educationally sound."

When assigned to Saturday school each student receives assignments from their teachers relating to classwork missed the day the absence occurred, with the idea of helping the student not fall behind. Wait too long to make up the missed work and the benefit is lost.

"If there's a backlog of students needing to attend Saturday school to eradicate absences then you're just going through the motions and we don't want that," said Lemon, noting that this was what happened near the end of the 1992-93 school year.

"We want good attendance at school and when absences are eradicated, we want it to be educationally

sound."

Because so many students have put off attending Saturday school this year, as of spring semester students who miss their assigned date will no longer have the option of making it up on a later Saturday.

"That has been eliminated," said Principal Ed Lemon. "We had a school attendance problem and then we had a Saturday attendance problem. Now when it's time to do it, you've just got to do it."

During the first three months of the 1993-94 school term, student attendance fell from 95.2 percent the first month to 93.3 percent the second month and then 91.5 percent the third month—which meant that in November nearly one in every 10 students enrolled was absent on an average day.

In contrast attendance during the first three months of 1992-93 ranged from 99.5 percent the first month to 94.8 percent the second month, and 94.1 percent the third month.

School board members approved the change at their Jan. 10 meeting, with member Polly Russ praised West Brunswick for taking steps to change the attendance policy "before it was too late."

Attendance is one of the factors considered by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction in its annual "report card" issued on the school. Attendance is one of the few areas in which Brunswick County exceeds the state's average.

PUBLIC HEARING TONIGHT

Leland Town Council To Consider Transportation Plan Thursday

Leland Town Council will begin its meeting tonight (Jan. 20) with a public hearing on the Greater Wilmington Urban Area Transportation Plan.

Following the hearing, council is expected to consider a resolution to approve and adopt the plan.

Also on the agenda are:

- report from Police Chief Charles Cliff;
- discussion by the town attorney concerning scheduling and notices of public hearings;
- scheduling of a public hearing on rezoning property at 207 Old Fayetteville Rd. from residential manufactured home (RMH) to multi-family (MF);

■ scheduling of a public hearing on an amendment to the Leland zoning ordinance concerning mobile/manufactured homes;

■ scheduling of a public hearing to amend the Leland zoning ordinance concerning garages/accessory buildings;

■ scheduling of a public hearing to amend to the zoning ordinance concerning "that a non-conforming

use may be transferred to a new owner as long as there has not been a lapse of use for one year;"

■ speed limit ordinance;

■ discussion of building inspector for the town;

■ monthly tax collector's report by Joyce Bragg;

■ tax releases;

■ scheduling a work session with Leland Volunteer Fire Department Board of Directors.

Rosemobile Visits Planned

The mobile office of Congressman Charlie Rose will make four stops in Brunswick County as the "Rosemobile" starts the 1994 schedule of curbside service for 7th Congressional District residents.

A representative of Rose's office will be available for conferences at the following post offices:

■ Wednesday, Jan. 26, Southport, 9-11 a.m.; Supply, noon until 2 p.m.

■ Wednesday, Feb. 2, Shallotte, 9-11 a.m.; South Brunswick, noon until 2 p.m.

Those who have a problem with a federal agency are invited to visit the mobile office. Opinions on federal legislation are also welcomed, according to Rose spokesman Wayne Jackson.

Appointments are not necessary. The offices operate on a first-come, first-served basis, Jackson said.

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