

Rolling On The Ramp

Varnamtown's new public boat ramp is under construction, and talks continue on the adjacent parking lot. Page 7-A.

The Other Olympics...

A team of 15 Shallotte Middle School students will compete in the upcoming state Science Olympiad. Page 5-B.

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Retirement is a new and welcome beginning if you do it with style. Read all about it in **Retirement Living**, Section D.

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STAFF PHOTO BY LYNN CARLSON

Wheeling And Dealing On Valentine's Day

Members of the Shallotte Wheel and Dealers Square Dance Club delight residents attending a Valentine's Dance Monday at Autumn Care in Shallotte. The square dancers not only performed but included residents in their dances during a party attended by staff, visitors and family members, too. Juanita Roberts and Fred Karger were named king and queen of the ball. Their picture is on Page 6A.

Teachers' Request To Separate Pay, Scores Receives Board's Support

BY SUSAN USHER

Power play. Failure of communication. Misunderstanding. Resistance to change. A matter of (dis)trust.

All these terms have been used to describe circumstances leading to an impasse between Brunswick County School system officials and school faculties that came to a head Monday night, just four days before county schools were due to submit revised Senate Bill 2 plans for the 1994-95 academic year.

Dressed in Valentine's Day red and holding heart-shaped signs bearing messages such as "Have A Heart, Vote Smart" and "Professionalism is the (heart) of the matter," between 200 and 250 Brunswick County teachers filed into the Supply Elementary School gymnasium Monday night to confront the Brunswick County Board of Education—and to come away with a reprieve and a vote of support.

Their presence backed requests

presented by Shallotte Middle School guidance counselor Mary Yates, president of the Brunswick County Chapter of the N.C. Association of Educators: rescission of the "resolution for school improvement" first adopted by the board last spring, support of site-based management, an increase in teachers' local pay supplements.

Teachers said they want a chance to see if the plans that have been written will work before being made to rewrite them, she said, and believe their time can be better spent preparing for classes. The schools had been asked to incorporate systemwide goals, use a uniform format and make sure differentiated pay plans linked bonus pay as closely as possible to students' academic achievement.

"Teachers are on the firing lines in Brunswick County every day," Yates told the board, dealing with students who come from a problem-riddled community with 13-percent (See TEACHERS, Page 2-A)

OFFSET RISING COSTS OF LUMBER, BUILDING MATERIALS

Low Interest Rates Buoy Local Housing Market

BY SUSAN USHER

After a hesitant first quarter, home construction rebounded in the South Brunswick Islands during 1993, buoyed by historically low interest rates and following a trend that saw a 7.1 percent increase nationwide in the number of new single-family homes built.

"For the southern part of Brunswick County, I think everyone pretty much had a good year," said Jim Baker of McClure Realty.

Baker is president of the South Brunswick Islands Home Builders Association, which in the two months has added "10 or 12" new members for a total of about 85 members and associate members—another sign of health in the local industry.

"The previous year, 1992, was scary; 1993 was a comeback year and it's busy now," Baker said.

Another positive sign for the industry: material deliveries are requiring 1½ days' advance notice, compared to a half-day a year ago.

"I've only seen that once before, years ago. It's not 'How much is it?' but 'When can I get it?'"

Builder and Realtor Mark Saunders of Coastal Development & Realty said that building was generally strong last year in the immediate Holden Beach area, "surprisingly strong" considering the fluctuations in the cost of building materials—prices he expects will continue to rise this year.

Buooying local construction are inter-

est rates that fell to 7 percent and 7½ percent last year, the lowest in approximately 20 years, enough to offset rising construction costs.

Those two trends are expected to continue, hand-in-hand, into late 1994.

"We're very busy right now and I think it's going to be busy year even with building materials as high as they are," said Baker, who spent 15 years in retail construction material sales. Materials costs are the highest he's seen them, he said, with lumber costs increasing 80 percent to 100—adding \$4,000 to \$6,000 to the cost of an average house of 1,500 to 1,800 square feet in size.

"You take that figure and in probably three to five years you would gain it

back in low interest rates. That is why there is a lot of construction now. The interest is what kills you to start with."

"Low interest rates are the only factor offsetting the higher costs," concurred Saunders. "Time and again our customers are realizing they are going to have to pay \$7,000 more for a home than just a month or two ago, but are willing to do it to lock in that lower interest rate."

Local homebuilders like Baker and Saunders anticipate interest rates will remain low or increase very slowly over the next six months to nine months.

Slow First Quarter

Septic tank permit activity was off

(See LOW, Page 2-A)

1993 New Home Starts

		Homes	Valuation
Calabash	1993	65	\$ 5.03
	1992	69	4.09
Sunset Beach	1993	127	6.97
	1992	90	6.14
Ocean Isle	1993	56	7.06
	1992	36	4.96
Shallotte	1993	22	2.55
	1992	21	2.46
Holden Beach	1993	40	3.48
	1992	48	4.03
+County	1993	151	10.46
	1992	201	14.16

* To nearest million

+ Area outside municipal zoning authority

STILL SEEKING DONATIONS, VOLUNTEERS

Site Found For Temporary Shallotte Library

BY ERIC CARLSON

Thanks to a volunteer fundraising effort and the generosity of local citizens, towns and businesses, Shallotte library will remain open at a temporary location during the four-month renovation of its current building on Main Street.

The Friends of the West Brunswick Library support group has arranged to rent a 1,200-square-foot space in Resort Plaza, less than a mile west of the permanent site, where library officials hope to make the branch's entire collection available for public use.

The only questions left are when and for how long.

"As it stands now, we're in a somewhat fluid situation," said Don Eggert, chairman of the Brunswick County Library Board of Trustees.

"The public will need to bear with us and appreciate that this will be a significant relocation effort."

Work is nearing completion on two new branch libraries in Yaupon Beach and Leland, with the former expected to be open by April 1 and the latter by "mid-to-late-April," Eggert said. At that point, work is expected to begin on additions and extensive renovations at the Shallotte and Southport branches, which will be closed "around the middle of April."

Library personnel from the closed branches will help set up and run the new libraries. In addition, they will be called on to put Southport's materials into storage and to move Shallotte's into temporary quarters.

"It's kind of like owning four houses and try-

ing to move in and out of all of them at the same time," Eggert said.

Patrons of the West Brunswick Library can expect the branch to be closed for "several days to a week" during the move, he said.

While it is unlikely that the temporary library will maintain its current operating hours, Eggert said he would expect it to remain open "certainly more than two days a week."

At the board's last meeting, Friends of the Library officials guaranteed enough volunteers—with backup personnel—to keep the temporary branch open for as many hours as the county is willing to provide a library department supervisor.

(See FRIENDS, Page 2-A)

Brunswick Native Wins \$10,000 For Funny Video

BY DOUG RUTTER

Frightening your in-laws with a rubber snake and winning \$10,000 in the process seems too good to be true.

But that's exactly what happened to Brunswick County native Mike Varnum. His video of a rubber snake prank was the grand prize winner at a recent taping of the popular television show America's Funniest Home Videos.

The program, which was filmed two weeks ago in Hollywood, Calif., will be broadcast Sunday, Feb. 27, at 7 p.m. The half-hour program can be seen locally on WWAY-TV3.

Varnum, a 1975 West Brunswick High School graduate who now lives in Mebane, shot the award-winning video and set up the practical joke involving a rubber snake and a chest.

Varnum tied fishing line around the snake's head and positioned it inside the chest so that when the lid was lifted, it looked like the snake was alive.

The winning video features three of Varnum's relatives and their anticipated reaction to the snake gag. Varnum spooked in-laws Vernon and Nadine Sykes and sister-in-law Jill Best.

Varnum said he mailed the video to Hollywood last October and didn't hear anything for a long time. When the show's producers selected the video as a finalist, Varnum was given two days notice to catch a flight to California.

His wife, Janice, and mother-in-

law, Nadine, also made the trip. They flew to Hollywood Friday, Feb. 4, taped the show on Saturday and returned home Sunday.

"I was nervous at first," Varnum said. "It took about four hours to shoot the 30-minute show so it was a long wait. It was definitely worth it."

Varnum said he was "very surprised" to win. "We thought it was pretty good, but we never dreamed of taking first place."

Varnum is the son of Herbert "Midget" and Jeanette Varnum of Varnamtown. He left Brunswick County in 1985 to work for the Durham Fire Department, where he is a rescue specialist.

OIB May Expand Plan Board, Require Better Attendance

BY SUSAN USHER

What does a town do when its planning board has a meeting attendance problem?

Ocean Isle Beach Commissioners' approach was to set a joint meeting with the planning board Tuesday morning to discuss possible solutions.

But only one planning board representative showed up—Norfleet Underwood, appointed in January to replace Ken Proctor, who was elected a town commissioner.

Planning Board Chairman DeCarol Williamson and ETA member John David Frink both had appointments at the Brunswick County Tax Office Tuesday morning; no explanation was available for the absences of town member Bill Bullington and ETA member Judy McHenry.

Commissioners agreed Tuesday that a persistent meeting attendance problem over the past two years has hampered the Ocean Isle Beach

Planning and Zoning Board's ability to act on pending matters in a timely basis and in some instances, left commissioners to act without any recommendation from the planning board.

Since his election Proctor has pushed fellow commissioners to address the issue of planning board meeting attendance, and the broader question of whether the town needs a larger planning board.

Commissioners agreed that attendance was the biggest problem, not representation, but had little bad to say about a larger board.

"I just want to hear a good excuse for not having a five-member board," said Proctor. "It gives the town more input. I can't see any negatives. I can't see any reason not to do it."

Mayor Betty Williamson at first proposed the addition of alternate members who would be required to attend meetings, could participate in all

discussions, but only vote in the absence of a regular member, ensuring the presence of a quorum. However, most commissioners said they didn't think residents would be eager to serve under those limitations.

Instead, they preferred Kendall Suh's suggestion to expand the planning and zoning board to include five members from within the town limits and establish an attendance requirement that would force members off the board if they miss too many meetings.

At their next meeting commissioners will look at the idea in greater detail and set a public hearing on a specific proposal.

Underwood is one of three planning board members who live within the town limits and can vote on all matters coming before the board. Two

(See PLANNING, Page 2-A)

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