



Toughing It Out

Mrs. Glen York doesn't let a little chilly wind get between her and a place in the sun. The Sanford resident simply huddled up to enjoy a book break on the east end of Holden Beach one recent afternoon.

STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

TB Test Inquiry Finds Policy Slip-Up, But No Health Threat

BY ERIC CARLSON

Although some procedures "were not followed to the letter," public health was not jeopardized by the possible misreading of a tuberculosis (TB) skin test at the Brunswick County Health Department recently, Director Michael Rhodes said Tues.

In a closed meeting last month, former department nurse Christine Stewart told the county health board that she saw one of her colleagues allow a patient to leave the clinic with a positive TB test after recording it as negative.

When questioned about the allegations last week, Rhodes said he could not confirm or deny the report because he was not a health board member. He agreed to answer questions about the matter Tuesday after speaking with Health Board Chairman Patrick Newton.

Rhodes said that after hearing Stewart's remarks at the Feb. 14 meeting, the board asked him to do a complete investigation of the incident, "which was already being followed up on" when Stewart appeared before the board.

"She had spoken to other nurses (about the test) and we were already looking into it," Rhodes said.

While not supplying names or details about the incident, Rhodes said his inquiry indicated that the department was complying with guidelines set by the Centers For Disease Control for TB testing. But in this

case "a procedural policy was not followed to the letter of the policy," he said.

However, the investigation has not confirmed or refuted Stewart's assertion that the test was improperly read. Nor is it ever likely to.

The test involves an injection on the patient's forearm that must be examined 48 hours after it is administered. A redness or swelling around the injection can indicate that further testing should be done.

"It's not an either/or situation. There are gray areas in the beginning stages of a positive reading," Rhodes said. "At certain levels of redness, we bring the patient back for a second reading. At other levels, an X-ray is recommended. I did not see the results of this particular test."

"My understanding is that this person had a very minimal amount of redness. When it gets to be that small, one nurse may read it one way and another nurse will read it another way. We try to err on the side of public health and ask a patient to come back if there is any doubt whatsoever."

"This man has been contacted and he will have further testing," he said.

Rhodes said he is satisfied that the health department has adequate policies in place to safeguard the community against a TB outbreak. He has asked Nurse Supervisor Victoria Smith to "discuss these with the staff and make sure all in-house

policies are adhered to and assure that this does not happen again in the future."

"The bottom line of all this is, it was an infraction that did not pose a health threat to the community," Rhodes said.

BID APPROVAL PUSHED BACK TO MAR. 21

Warren Supports Special Meeting To Accelerate Library Construction

BY ERIC CARLSON

In an effort to help local volunteers open a temporary library in Shallotte, County Commissioners Chairman Don Warren on Tuesday said he will call a special meeting to approve construction bids for scheduled renovations and additions at two county library branches.

Bids were opened Tuesday afternoon for improvements at the Shallotte and Southport libraries, which will be closed for at least four months during construction. Those bids must get final approval from the county commissioners before work can begin about three to four weeks later.

The Friends of the Library support group has found a location to set up a temporary library branch. They began paying rent on the space March 1.

Unfortunately, the March 7 commissioners meeting has been canceled because several members are scheduled to be out of town.

At Monday's meeting of the Brunswick County Library Board of Trustees, Shallotte library supporters were dismayed to learn that the cancellation would push back bid approval until the next commissioners meeting on March 21. It would also set back plans to open the temporary library accordingly.

"We are quite concerned about the construction date since we are tied up with a building," FOL President Bob Twomey told the library board. "A lot of people have donated money and may be a little offended about paying for an empty space."

When told of the problem during an interview with the *Beacon* Tuesday, Warren said he would be willing to call a special meeting of the commissioners to approve the bids and help speed the process.

"I don't see any problem with it," Warren said. "I'd like to see them get started as soon as possible."

That news put a smile on the face of library board Chairman Don Eggert Tuesday evening. He said such a move would be "a real show of support and good will for the libraries" on the part of the commissioners.

The FOL also learned Monday that the county will be able to provide staff to keep the temporary branch open four days a week, including one evening, during the relocation. The schedule suggested by Library Director Maurice Tate and approved by the board calls for the temporary site to be open Mondays from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Tuesday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Leaders of the FOL said they have lined up more than 50 volunteers, including former teachers and librarians, to help man the temporary branch. The group has arranged to rent a 1,200-square-foot space in Resort Plaza, a short distance west of the existing library.

The board also approved temporary opening hours for the new Oak Island library branch, scheduled to open April 1, and the new Leland library branches, which should open its doors by mid-to-late April. The temporary schedule will be in effect at least until July, when the board

hopes to receive budget support for new library personnel.

The Leland library will be open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday except for Wednesday, when it will remain open until 8 p.m. The branch also will be open Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Sunday from 2 to 6 p.m.

Opening hours for the new library at Yaupon Beach will be 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, with evening hours until 8 p.m. Tuesdays. Weekend hours will be 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays and 2 to 6 p.m. Sundays.

At the bid opening Tuesday afternoon, the firm submitting the lowest bid for general contracting at the West Brunswick branch was an offer of \$186,466 from the W.R. Morris Construction Co. of Wilmington. Low bidder for work on the Southport branch was \$246,700 by Reagan Construction Co. of Wilmington.

Low bids for heating and air conditioning, plumbing and electrical work totalled \$124,156 for the two projects.

SBMS Slates Parents' Night

Parent conference night will be held Wednesday, March 9, from 1:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. at South Brunswick Middle School.

Parents may pick up progress reports and talk with teachers as needed, said Donna King. No appointments are needed.

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Conservancy Sponsors 'Fling' On March 3

The Nature Conservancy's North Carolina Chapter is holding a Pre-Spring Fling in Wilmington to introduce members and the public to the work of the Southeast Coastal Plain Stewardship Office.

The event will take place Thursday, March 3, from 7:30 until 9 p.m. in the council chambers, City Hall/Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. The event is free, and free parking is available beside City Hall.

"Since the Southeast Coastal Plain office opened this fall, Linda Gintoli, the Southeast Coastal Plain

Steward, has been busy coordinating the land management needs of Nature Conservancy preserves in this ecologically rich area of the state," said Conservancy spokesman Ida Phillips.

"Her interesting projects include creating a preserve design for the Black River, organizing prescribed burns of longleaf pine savannas, and leading field trips to the Green Swamp and other area preserves."

Refreshments will be served and information will be presented about land stewardship in the southeast Coastal Plain.

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