



Machining students ready for work, 7

"News from Next Door"

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# Man, 31, jailed under \$860,000 bond

BY PETER WILLIAMS AND MILES LAYTON  
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BUNCH

A 31-year-old Edenton man facing multiple charges based on an alleged crime spree that took place in several counties, is in the Chowan County Jail.

Last month, Dustin Bunch of Seaview Drive, was apprehended by U.S. Marshals in Florida and

served from Beaufort, Perquimans, Pitt and Chowan counties. Bunch was charged in

extradited back to North Carolina.

Bunch's bond has been set at \$860,000 based off warrants Perquimans County Sheriff Shelby White said Bunch was linked to a series of car burglaries that started in December a continued through a few months ago. The Perquimans County crimes primarily happened in the area of Heritage Shores, Woodland Church

Road and Burnt Mill Road.

White said the stolen items were mainly lower value items like knives, change, sunglasses and a weed trimmer. In one case, Bunch is charged with stealing a book of stamps.

Once Bunch was taken before a Perquimans County magistrate, he was also charged for one case of breaking and entering a motor vehicle in Pasquo-

tank County.

His Perquimans County charges include one count of larceny, one count of possession/concealing stolen property, 13 counts of breaking and entering a motor vehicle, nine counts of larceny, 11 counts of possessing/concealing stolen property, and two counts of breaking and entering.

Bertie County was also investigating Bunch's role

for crimes there, but they haven't made any charges, White said.

As to Chowan County, Detective John McArthur of the Chowan County Sheriff's Office said Bunch was charged with three counts of breaking and entering into a motor vehicle, larceny, obtaining property by false pretenses when

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## Teachers give schools positive grades

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
 News Editor

On the whole, Perquimans County teachers seem well satisfied with their working conditions based on the latest biennial survey by the state.

In one of the final questions, asking if their school is a good place to work and learn, 95.6 Perquimans County teachers answered they agreed or strongly agreed. That's an improvement over the 91.7 percent figure in 2016 and the 86 percent figure in 2014.

Statewide the figure was 87.1 this year. When the question was if the survey was going to be used to improve the schools, 97.5 percent said they agreed or strongly agreed. Two years ago the local figure was 88.1 percent and two years before that it was 86.1 percent. The statewide figure this year was 84 percent.

The first of the state surveys was given in 2002 and they take place every two years.

Perquimans Superintendent Matthew Cheeseman said the school system does their own survey during the off years.

He said they are valuable and they are shared and used.

"We are always working on improvement and that survey is used at each school site to address or respond to situations. Each principal and teacher advisory council looks at the survey results to develop action items."

That might be one reason why the participation rates locally have climbed over the years.

Perquimans also had high marks when it comes to safety. Some 98.5 percent of teachers answered they agreed or strongly agreed that their school offered a safe environment. That's up from 96.2 percent two years ago and 90.6 two years before that.

The statewide figure this year was 89.4 percent.

The survey was conducted before the Perquimans County Commission agreed to fund a fourth School Resource Officer this year. The school system had three SROs to cover the four campuses. Having one for every school puts Perquimans in a rather limited club. There are probably fewer than 10 school systems across the state that have an SRO at every school.

In not every category did Perquimans score in the 90 percent or better. In the area of parental support for teachers, the new figure was 82.3 percent but that was an improvement over 74.2 percent in 2016 and 72.6 percent two years before that.

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## BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION



STAFF PHOTOS BY PETER WILLIAMS

Top: The North Carolina Department of Transportation has closed a section of U.S. 17 Business/Creek Drive to allow the removal and replacement of a bridge over Brights Mill Creek. The completion date for the project is Nov. 30. Detour signs have been posted. Right: A barge prepares to drive test pilings into the Perquimans River on Monday. DOT hopes to start construction on the replacement for the S-Bridge in the summer of 2019.



## Back to school events planned

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
 News Editor

Perquimans County Schools will be putting on Back To School events at Perquimans Central on Aug. 9 and Aug. 14. The location is Central, but the event is for the parents or guardians of every child in the Perquimans school system. The hours are 3-7 p.m.

"It will give parents two different opportunities to complete all the paperwork that is required," said Lisa Lane, the spokeswoman for the school system. "There will also be information about transportation

and school nutrition and how to check a child's grade using the on-line parent portal."

Representatives from the public library, State Employees Credit Union and the YMCA will be there as well.

Chromebooks will not be issued at the event. Lane said they would be distributed at school once the new year starts.

On Aug. 26 from noon until 3 p.m., there will be free haircuts offered for students at Perquimans County High School. Area barbers will be volunteering their time and there will be free back to

school items available.

"Last year we had a significant turnout," Lane said. "This year we're hoping to get six barbers. The haircuts will strictly be for young men, but the event is open for everyone."

Lane said the schools are partnering with the New Hope Community Reunion group and pastor Joe Welch and his wife.

The Alpha Upsilon Sigma chapter of Phi Beta Sigma fraternity Inc. is also collecting book bags for the event.

School starts back on Aug. 27.

## Group to honor first responders

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
 News Editor

A small group of women will honor Perquimans County's first responders Aug. 18 for the second straight year.

Lend A Hand Ministry was organized about 10 years ago, said Vanora Brothers, the coordinator for the event.

"We're not a church, it's a community-based group that got together and organized as way to help people who are in need. We've come together and held fundraisers for people who are terminally ill with their expenses for medication and all."

Last year, the group held a back to school bash for kids.

The "Lend A Hand" group has about 10 members, all women, and all African American. Some men also help out from time to time. They attend different churches, but work on projects for Lend A Hand" as a group.

Brothers said the idea of reaching out to say thanks to first responders seemed like a good project for the group.

"They (first responders) are so dedicated and they work so hard," Brothers said. "This is just a way of saying thank you. They put their lives on the line every day for us."

From her home on Harvey Point Road, Brothers said she sees EMS coming past her house most every day, sometimes several times a day. They've also had to come to her daughter because of a medical condition.

Sheriff Shelby White said he truly appreciates what Lend A Hand is doing.

"First, we are honored just to get the show of appreciation," White said. "We do what is consider a thankless job, and it means a lot when we get some show of appreciation."

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## Van service may offer options for area employees, workers

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
 News Editor

A private van pool may provide some answers for some employers looking to attract hard to find talent from outside the area and local workers another option for getting to the job.

One issue in rural northeastern North Carolina is people may live in one place, but have to commute to another place for work, sometimes long distances, said Angela Welsh,

the planning director for the Albemarle Rural Planning Organization. The group is part of the larger Albemarle Commission.

In July, the Workforce Transportation Committee of the RPO met with an official from Enterprise Rent-A-Car.

Welsh said Enterprise has a "ride share" division and currently runs a van pool that shuttles workers from Virginia to the Coast Guard base in Elizabeth City and back to Virginia.

Enterprise now has 350 van pools running in the state, Welsh said. The cost to ride is based on the type of vehicle that is needed and the distance to and from the business.

"It's not going to be work for everybody," Welsh said of the Enterprise solution.

"If you are working in fast food and working for minimum wage, you could be spending half your check on transportation unless it was subsidized by the business. The ICPTA (Inter-County Public Transportation Authority) tried this, but their insurance company wouldn't let them."

ICPTA serves Pasquotank, Perquimans, Camden, Chowan and Currituck counties. ICPTA services are intended to transport, the general public to nutrition sites, medical appointments and other locations in order to access services or "attend activities related

to daily living."

The one-way cost for a local ride is \$4.

Welsh threw out a figure of \$1,000 to \$1,200 a month for one van and a driver with Enterprise for a longer commute. If the van held 10 people, the cost drops to \$100 or \$120 per person.

Welsh said the solution might not work for some workers and employers.

"But for others, who need specific skills and pay better, the situation could work."

Welsh said Regulator Marine in Edenton is looking into the Enterprise option.

The Enterprise service can provide door-to-door

services for workers going to a specific employers, Welsh said. It could also pick up and drop off workers at a specific location, like a parking lot, where they could meet.

"Some people are going to the beach to work," Welsh said she used to do that.

"I drove to Nags Head for years to work. I ended up buying a Prius because at that time gas was \$4 a gallon."

The Albemarle Commission and its workforce development arm serve 10 counties: Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hyde, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell and Washing-

ton. She said Enterprise conducts all the required mapping (finding "clusters" of employees based on their addresses) and provides the driver agreement between Enterprise and the driver, not the driver and the company he works for which places liability on Enterprise for any accidents.

Welsh said committee members felt the Enterprise "ride share" program was promising. "We intend to continue discussions with them and hopefully be able to use their ride share program throughout our 10 counties."

The Enterprise official involved could not be reached for comment.

