

# Hospital May Close 55-Bed Facility

## Health Program In Trouble

The classification of Chowan Hospital's extended care facility as a "nursing home" is loaded with red ink and has more than a tinge of political overtones. But more critically, it is forcing the hospital to abandon nearly 50 per cent of its available beds.

While the greatest impact will be felt along the Public Parade, those within the adjoining six counties who have taken advantage of the facility will feel the sting.

What is, however, almost criminal is that in a time of skyrocketing hospital costs, the area is being punished for an innovative concept of total health care under a single umbrella. While the administration of such a concept is touch-and-go and much more difficult to operate in the black, savings are realized by those who experience lengthy periods of illness and recuperation.

Furthermore, to abandon the 55 extended care facility beds would equal the closing of a small industry in the community. Forty-eight jobs are involved as is an annual payroll of \$163,251.

At the present time the community can ill afford to lose the facility, the jobs or the payroll.

Nevertheless, the community cannot expect hospital trustees to continue to operate a facility with a built-in loss of more than \$3,000 monthly.

Here's the problem. From the best figures available, the hospital's average per patient per day is about \$17 in the extended care facility. The hospital will render in the vicinity of 17,200 patient days a year in the facility of which 80 per cent will be rendered to Medicaid patients.

If the reimbursement for Medicaid patients remains at \$14 per day, the hospital will lose approximately \$37,000 annually.

Chowan Hospital's extended care facility has been licensed as such—never as a nursing home. Therefore, the erroneous classification "seriously impedes the progress of rendering the full range of health care" at the hospital.

It also causes one to wonder just how far state and federal agencies will go to render useless a vital community institution that is doing something these agencies take credit for doing but are not—perfecting economies on behalf of those they serve. Any other observation would be just as erroneous as the "nursing home" classification.

## Help Stamp Out Cancer

Cancer as a cause of death has few peers in America. The story is no different among those who meander along the Public Parade.

During the month of October, those who are fortunate enough to have escaped the disease, as well as those who have been cured, have the opportunity to contribute to the Cancer Crusade.

The \$3,500 goal for Chowan County is realistic. It is less than 35 cents per capita. Yet, each year campaign leaders go right down to the wire in attempting to bank sufficient funds so Chowan County can pay its fair share of the Cancer Society budget.

Considerable progress has been made toward development of cures for many types of cancer as well as making the public aware of the warning signals which could save many lives. This has been done thanks to volunteer contributions.

If you haven't made your contribution, it is not too late. But it is time to get a successful Cancer Crusade behind us and move on to other worthwhile projects and programs within the community.

## Putting Spotlight On Edenton

The Town of Edenton has the opportunity for a most significant milestone celebration in 1972—a 250th anniversary. Preliminary steps are now being taken for such a celebration.

Mayor George Alma Byrum recently named Alton G. Elmore to chair a blue ribbon committee of community leaders to plan for the event. The first meeting was held Tuesday and the group witnessed a presentation from a na-

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## Area Halloween Activity Planned

The annual Halloween Carnival at the Rocky Hock Community Center and Chowan Academy, sponsored jointly by the two groups, will be held on Friday, October 29 at 6 P. M.

This year the Rocky Hock Community share will be donated to the Unit C of the Chowan Rescue Squad.

Some of the features at the carnival will be hot dogs, hamburgers, drinks, home-made cakes, pies, cookies, candy, along with other foods. Also there will be a spook house, fishing pond, fortune teller, dart games, hay and pony rides, costume parade, and the king and queen, prince and princess and henpecked husband contests.

Chief of Police J. D. Parrish is requesting that children over 12 years not participate in the customary trick or treating this Halloween.

Chowan Hospital's 55-bed extended care facility will be forced to close December 1 unless action is taken to increase the \$14 per day maximum reimbursement for Medicaid patients. This drastic action was taken on Wednesday of last week by the executive mit-

tee. Although licensed in accordance with the standards of the N. C. Medical Care Commission, the extended care facility—composed of the old hospital and nurses' home—has been classified as a "nursing home" and therefore state

and federal reimbursement is limited to \$14 per day. This limit was voted by the 1971 General Assembly and contained in a bill which prohibits additional reimbursement should the county be willing to assist.

Thomas H. Shepard, hospital board

president, said 80 per cent of the patients in the extended care facility qualify for Medicaid. The actual cost of operating the unit is \$17 per day which means the hospital anticipates a deficit of \$37,000 annually.

Also, Thomas M. Surratt, hospital administrator, stated: "The loss of these beds will destroy the effectiveness of our complex as we have developed it." The administrator said the complex has been developed to provide the maximum amount of care a patient needs and at a minimum cost.

After a new acute care unit, consisting of 61 beds, was occupied in October, 1970, several thousands of dollars have been spent converting the old hospital into the extended care facility. Additional work is presently underway.

In addition to the loss of nearly half the number of beds available to patients within a seven-county service area, Surratt said 48 jobs would be eliminated. The payroll for these jobs amounts to \$163,251.

Surratt pointed out that the classification by the Department of Social Services and Board of Health, which has been upheld by the Attorney General, is particularly disheartening at a time when Chowan Hospital has taken the lead in a total health program for such a wide area of Northeastern North Carolina.

"We have taken careful steps not to create a nursing home, but an extended care facility to relieve acute patient beds and reduce the cost of medical care within the community," he pointed out. "We have in fact done just this."

The administrator said while the hospital has never been licensed as a nursing home by the State Board of Health, this classification has been placed on the facility. He added: "The hospital is so licensed as to allow it to convert beds in the extended care facility back to acute care beds, but we don't need them for this purpose at the present time."

There are 14 hospitals, including the one here, where extended care facilities are operated. Three others have units under construction with the use of Hill-Burton funds. Two hospitals have closed their long term care units and a third has cut way back.

## Regional Office

A. U. S. Department of Commerce official declared here last Thursday that great strides had been made toward total development of this area with the opening of Albemarle Regional Planning and Development Commission. Thomas Francis of Washington said the federal government and area have joined hands in full partnership for development.

Francis, director of the Office of Development Districts, spoke at a banquet which was part of a day-long celebration upon the formal opening of ARPDC offices on East Queen Street. Some 200 leaders from the 10-county Albemarle Area attended the banquet which also had other federal officials and state leaders on the program.

Earlier in the evening, Jack Habit, owner of the building, presented the key to W. B. Gardner, commission chairman. Francis and Ward Miller of Coastal Plains Regional Commission applied the scissors to the traditional red ribbon.

Setting the tone for the banquet at Chowan Golf & Country Club was Mayor George Alma Byrum. He stated: "We're conscious we have a lot to offer for growth and development. We're very proud to be the home of the new offices and we hope you continue to aid, advise and work with us."

Francis explained the "county uniting approach" is a new concept which provides for more local control and decision making. "You are no longer told what your problems are," he stated. "Now you can decide what your own problems and priorities are."

The speaker called regionalism in

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A Saturated Peanut Field—Extensive Crop Damage Reported

## Crop Picture Is Bleak Area Title Given To Mrs. Smithson

By Patricia M. Arnold

"How it will turn out nobody knows" . . . "It's a tragedy" . . . "Worse thing that could happen to a farmer" . . . "Really bad" . . . "Everybody is going to suffer" . . . "It will take a lot of prayers."

These are just a few of the comments from farmers in Chowan County when asked about the situation with the peanut crop and all the damaging rain.

According to most of the farmers the peanut crop is already suffering a 20 per cent loss with a loss of over 50 per cent expected by some farmers if the rain continues.

J. Gilliam Wood estimates a loss of 25 to 30 per cent to date and has plans to return to the fields later in the week if the weather improves. He feels farmers need dry, windy weather to dry out the peanuts and ground.

Charlie, Jr., and Walter Small are

worrying about a way to pull the combines through the field since the tractors keep sinking in the mud. They estimate that one third of their crop is in and guess the loss will be as much as 40 to 50 per cent if the rain continues. They remarked that the vines are dying and the peanuts are dropping off the vines.

Pete Thompson, county extension chairman, stated for every ton of peanuts lost the farmers would stand to lose about \$300. Some farmers are reporting 600 to 700 pounds per acre loss now with more expected.

Thomas Paul Griffin stated that on the Griffin Farm 18 acres of peanuts had not been picked but he had hopes to be in the field by the weekend. He stated it was a touch-and-go situation with no answers as yet.

Bill Brabble reports he farms 50 acres of peanuts and that half of his crop

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## Picks Committees

E. N. (Pete) Manning, president of Edenton Chamber of Commerce, this week released the membership on 13 committees who will plan a positive program for progress in the area during the coming chamber year.

Manning said he is extremely pleased with the composition of the various committees. "The committees are made up of people who have a sincere interest in Edenton and Chowan County, and I am sure they will make a valuable contribution to a successful year," he stated.

Committees include:

### Executive Committee

Manning, Jack Harris, vice president; A. B. Harless, Jr., secretary; William Easterling, treasurer; Carlton F. Jackson, ex-officio; and Robert W. Moore, executive vice president.

### Finance Committee

Easterling, chairman; Manning, Harless, Moore and Bob Hutchinson.

### Aviation Committee

Jackson, chairman, James Darnell, J. P. Ricks, Jr., N. J. George and Easterling.

### Industrial Committee

W. P. Jones, chairman; J. Gilliam Wood, W. B. Gardner, George Alma

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Mayor George Alma Byrum John Frailey

G. Fred Steele, Jr. Irvin Aldridge



Regional Office Opened—Formal opening of the Albemarle Regional Planning and Development Commission was held last Thursday afternoon with ribbon cutting at the office on East Queen Street and a banquet at Chowan Golf & Country Club. W. B. Gardner, chairman, is shown talking to a group prior to the opening. Others shown are: Jack Habit, John Frailey, Ward Miller and Thomas Francis. Wesley Cullipher, in wheelchair, executive director, and several others are shown in the picture at left.