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Criteria for aid outlined

BY ANGELA PEREZ
Staff Writer

To provide additional assistance to victims of the September hurricane, members of the Hurricane Isabel Unmet Needs Fund committee will be accepting financial assistance applications for the second round of distribution at Swain Auditorium beginning Wednesday, December 3rd from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Approved applicants will be granted up to \$250.00 to pay recent or current utility bills. Applications will be accepted each work-week day until the fund of roughly \$40 - \$45,000 is completely distributed.

The Hurricane Isabel Unmet Needs Fund is intended for Chowan County victims who, regardless of income:

1) Have immediate needs but cannot get assistance from other sources, including government programs.

2) Cannot wait until they receive other assistance.

3) Have losses that are not covered by insurance.

All applicants must demonstrate proof of loss. Those losses include:

1) Actual loss of wages or income. For example, due to the hurricane, your place of employment was closed for 5 days and you were not paid for those 5 days of lost work. Unmet Needs Fund workers will verify claims for lost wages with the employer or applicants may bring in paycheck stubs to prove loss.

2) Homeowners who suffered property damage. Applicants must bring in evidence of their loss, including insurance statements or copies of receipts for repair work.

3) Renters who experienced personal property loss that is not covered by their landlord. Damage to rental housing that is covered by the landlord or owner is not an eligible claim.

All applicants are asked to bring a form of identification and current or most recent

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Local merchants say holiday shopping in Edenton is off to a strong start. Early indications are that retail sales will be as good or better than last year's. Above, Nancy Winslow, owner of Top Sale Realty, shops at Good Tastes. (Staff photo by Tamika Spruill)

Holiday shopping off to a strong start in town

BY TAMIKA SPRUILL
Staff Writer

Christmas is one of America's favorite times of year. Despite that fact shopping during the Christmas holiday can be frantic with overcrowded stores and long lines. Considering all the damage from Hurricane Isabel, though, Edenton merchants weren't exactly sure what to expect as the holiday season approached. But they are all smiles now.

"Business has been picking up since the start of the holiday season. People have been buying an equal amount of jewelry and gifts. Diamonds are a favorite so far this year," says Peggy Anne Vaughan of Vaughan's Jewelry. "The community of

Edenton has always been good to Vaughan's. We appreciate their continued support."

This seems to be the trend for local merchants including Good Tastes and The Christian Bookseller.

"Business has picked up tremendously since Isabel. We are on par with last year," Gloria Willis owner of The Christian Booksellers notes. "A majority of my customers are buying Bibles, Christmas ornaments, cards and music."

At Good Taste, located in historic downtown Edenton, they've had seen a change in what customers are looking for this year.

"People want functional things now," says Good Taste's candy maker Lori Ann. "They

want something that looks pretty and works. People are buying a lot of kitchenware and usable accessories."

Even though the local and national economy has just started to see improvement, many holiday shoppers are buying the same amount as they did last year and perhaps a little more.

"I'll do the same as I did last year," says Edenton resident and Top Sale Realty owner Nancy Winslow.

Many shoppers have found reasons to do a little more holiday shopping than usual.

"I'm definitely shopping more this year," says Pat Waff, an employee of White Oak Elementary School. "I just got a new grandchild."

Debris issue still exists in community

BY TAMIKA SPRUILL
Staff Writer

Debris pickup in Chowan County was still a big issue at Monday night's County Commissioners Meeting.

Peter Rascoe, Special Projects Coordinator for Edenton and Chowan County, sites the problem that residents are still putting out debris after the second round of debris pickup.

"We still have people putting trash out after the second round of pickups," he stated. "FEMA will not pay for a third round of pickups. They (FE-MA) photograph roads that have been cleaned after the second rounds."

A majority of the "newly appearing" debris is not Isabel related. One commissioner raised the possibility of putting out signs announcing "this road has been cleaned by FEMA, you are now responsible for your own debris removal." Despite all of this Rascoe still remains optimistic about the situation.

"We only have about ten more days of pick-up in the county. The debris removal contractor wants to be finished completely by December 20," he noted. "We should



Rascoe

see the light at the end of the tunnel soon."

Isabel related issues still dominated a majority of the agenda at the Commissioners meeting, an issue, County Manager Cliff

Copeland stated that has to be worked through.

"The response to the hurricane is time consuming. I ask that everyone please be patient. We will move forward," Copeland noted. "When Peter Rascoe gets 45 calls during the Thanksgiving Holidays about Isabel related issues, the after effects of Isabel are still a big issue."

So far Chowan County has spent \$1,127,761 to put the county back together after Isabel's devastation. Chowan County has been reimbursed approximately \$600,000 from FEMA with paperwork still being processed. The county has also received \$406,000 from insurance that will be used for the restoration/renovation of Swain Auditorium, Chowan Arts Council and the Senior Center.

Cost of burying lines 'significant'

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

A state survey has put a hefty price tag on burying power lines in North Carolina, while Edenton has yet to begin its study of putting its lines underground.

A report released by the state Utilities Commission last month stated burying power lines in the state would take 25 years, at a cost of \$41 billion. The task would increase power

customers' monthly bills by more than 125 percent. In effect, a \$100 light bill in Edenton would jump to \$225 to pay for such a project.

In late October, Edenton Mayor Roland Vaughan was tasked with selecting a committee to study the time and cost of burying the town's power lines. The town was without power for nearly a week after Hurricane Isabel

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Farm-City Banquet awards are presented

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

With the numbers of family farms increasingly shrinking across the U.S., production and profitability continue to gain importance in agriculture.

Chowan County farmers celebrated their know-how last week at the annual Farm-City Awards Banquet. With Thanksgiving in mind, local agriculture was touted as a cornerstone of the local economy.

County Commissioner board chairman Louis Belfield grew up on a family farm in Chowan. He praised the sacrifices and struggles farmers endure to bring food to tables across the country, and make a profit while doing it.

"I know firsthand the benefits and hard work of a farming life," Belfield said.

Edenton Mayor Roland Vaughan, a veteran commodities broker, heralded the economic significance of Chowan farmers and livestock producers.

Chowan farmers' produced nearly \$34.8 million in crops and livestock in 2001, according to the latest figures available from the state Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Web site.

But tobacco buyouts and pea-



From left, Sarah Hupp and Kelsey Lichtenwalner accept their Outstanding 4-H'er of the Year awards from Bob Gaines of the Chowan-Edenton Optimist Club, while Dick Vail and Leonard Small applaud. (Staff photo by Sean Jackson)

nut quotas have posed problems for farmers in recent years.

And county farmers were not spared the wrath of a late-summer hurricane that struck when some crops were nearly ready for harvest.

Dick Vail, keynote speaker for

the annual event, listed some of the damage Chowan farmers suffered from Hurricane Isabel. Crops suffered an estimated \$9.4 million in damage, while equipment and buildings took an \$8.5 million hit.

More than 28,000 acres of farm-

land were affected.

According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, there are 151 farms in Chowan, with 36,269 acres of harvested cropland.

Last year, Chowan ranked seventh out of 100 counties in the state in peanut production (15.8

million pounds), eighteenth in cotton (23,500 bales), thirty-fourth in corn (376,000 pounds), and sixty-fifth in tobacco (1,990 pounds).

While businessmen and politicians rubbed shoulders with hog farmers and peanut growers, awards were given to some of the top men, women, and youths in the Chowan agribusiness community.

• Peanut grower A.J. Smith and Sons was recognized for the 2002 Peanut Award presented by Vic Alexander, president of the Edenton-Chowan Chamber of Commerce, for producing a yield of 4,766 pounds per acre on 155 acres.

• Michelle Bunch and Angela Toppin were co-winners of the 2003 Women in Agriculture honor presented by Virginia Hobbs, an advisor with the Chowan Extension and Community Association.

• Kelsey Lichtenwalner and Sarah Hupp were named the Outstanding 4-H'ers and were presented plaques by Bob Gaines of the Chowan-Edenton Optimist Club.

• The brother team of Kenneth and Richard Goodwin shared the 2003 Outstanding Young Farmer award presented by Jimmie Parrish, president of the Chowan County Farm Bureau.

Tour tickets on sale

Tickets are on sale now for the annual Christmas Candlelight Tour in Edenton which will take place Friday, Dec. 12 and Saturday, Dec. 13. Hours will be 4-8 p.m.

Tickets are \$25 per person; children 12 and under admitted free. To purchase yours, call (252) 482-2637.

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