

# THE CHOWAN HERALD

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## County making plans for road improvements

BY ANGELA PEREZ  
Staff Writer

Preliminary plans for improving stretches of NC 32 and US 17 in Chowan County are in the early stages of development.

Money for these improvements has been granted through the N.C. Department of Transportation's Moving Ahead! Project. The project was initiated in February of last year by Gov. Mike Easley to bring a new level of safety and mobility to the state's transportation network by attacking the state's most critical needs—maintenance, modernization and public transportation.

Easley claims that the initiative will result in nearly 30,000 new jobs and have a \$4 billion impact on the economy.

The project will: (1) provide \$700 million for highway maintenance, modernization and public transportation over the next two years, (2) increase the highway maintenance budget by 45 percent over the next two years, (3) jump start the highway modernization program with a 25 percent increase and (4) increase public transportation funding by about 25 percent over the next two years.

For 2004, Chowan County has been granted \$400,000 to widen and resurface the 3.2 miles of road from SR 1231 to SR 1222 (Dillard's Mill Road), and \$250,000 to widen and resurface the 1.5 miles of road on US 17 Business from SR 1132 to US 17 Bypass. For 2005, Chowan County has been granted \$900,000 to widen and resurface the 6.1 miles of road on NC 32 between US 17 Business to NC 37, as well as \$4,500,000 to widen and resurface the 10.4 miles of road on NC 32 from SR 1224 to the Gates County line.

"All North Carolina counties were given an opportunity

for their input on the state's transportation plan," said Barry Hobbs of the Chowan County DOT office. "We hope that this will be more than a two year program."

According to Hobbs, each county was given a very short period to develop improvement projects under the Moving Ahead! initiative. Because of this narrow time frame, the initial projects tackled by Chowan County's DOT had to be the simplest ones, those that did not have right of way or complicated environmental issues.

Making improvements on Hwy. 32's stretch of road from

SR1224 to the Gates County line is one of the most vital parts of the Moving Ahead! Project, says Hobbs.

"We recognize that there is narrow pavement on this road. Improvements on this road will require a lot of planning," he said. "We didn't concentrate on improving this area first because of drainage issues. Routine resurfacing would not solve the problems on this road."

In the past, improvements to this road have been impractical due to drainage costs.

"With this money," said

Hobbs, "we can lengthen culverts and hopefully get 24 feet of pavement. Right now it's about 20 feet of pavement. At the outset it was fine but now there is a lot of truck traffic through there. It really needs the most attention."

The N.C. Department of Transportation believes that the new transportation improvements will strengthen the state's economic competitiveness and attract new industry. Locally, officials hope that these improvements will prove to be critical first-steps towards long-term economic solutions in this area.

## AN ICY MESS



For the second time this month, a wintry blast cancelled school and made local roads hazardous to navigate. Early Sunday afternoon, snow began to fall throughout the area. Between two and four inches of snow and sleet fell before the storm ended, the National Weather Service in Wakefield, VA reported Monday. By late afternoon Sunday snow changed over to sleet before changing to freezing rain for the overnight hours. Cold drizzle continued through Tuesday morning. Slush greeted those morning commuters willing to test road conditions Monday. Unlike other areas of the North Carolina, there were no serious accidents or traffic-related fatalities reported in Chowan or surrounding counties, according to 1st Sgt. J.S. Hardison of the NC Highway Patrol. Only one power outage was reported locally; a transformer blew on Granville Street Sunday night. "(Town utility crews) went out and fixed that in a real short time," said Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton. Edenton-Chowan Schools were closed Monday, to the delight of local youngsters (above) who took advantage of the opportunity to enjoy a snowball fight. School resumed Tuesday morning after a two-hour delay. (Staff photo by Sean Jackson)

## Chief Bonner recognized for his dedication

BY SEAN JACKSON  
Staff Writer

While home from Okinawa during leave from the Marines, a 19-year-old Greg Bonner was approached by police Chief J.D. Parrish about joining his force.

"He was very convincing," Bonner, now Edenton's top cop, said of Parrish's pitch in 1972. Bonner has been in uniform in Edenton for 30 years and counting. But it wasn't a career he'd planned on pursuing.

"In fact," Bonner said last week, "police work was the last thing on my mind."

His thinking is different now.

"I've found that this is my calling," Bonner, 50, said.

But it was a military life that first interested Bonner. He was in the U.S. Marine Corps for about 18 months when Parrish made his pitch. The military allowed Bonner to exit early and join the Edenton Police Department.

He's been there ever since. "I feel like I've been an asset to the Town of Edenton, to the citizens here," he said.

Times have changed since Bonner first walked the beat as a rookie. Laptop computers have wedged their way into



Police Chief Greg Bonner

patrol cruisers. Radar guns are high-tech now. Sobriety tests don't require hauling drunk-driving suspects into the station. The bad guys have more guns.

Bonner recalls the days when cops weren't as scrupulous with rules and regulations as he says they are today. It wasn't that police disregarded citizens' rights, but more emphasis is being placed on such rights in modern policing, he said.

In addition, departments now interact with citizens in myriad ways, from chatting with kids in classrooms to speeches at Rotary meetings.

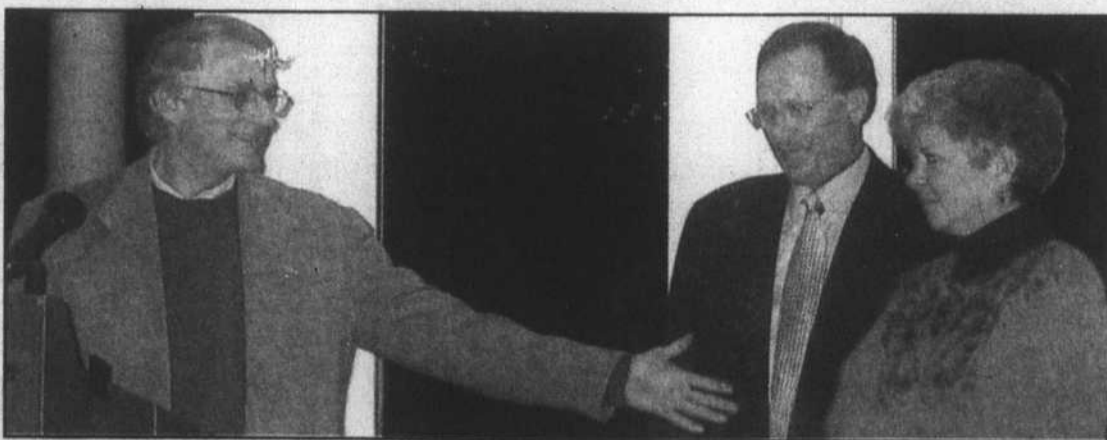
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## Students to shadow workers

Remember the first time an adult opened your eyes to a career that made you think, "That's what I want to do!"? Now, you can provide the same opportunity for a student in your community.

On Monday, Feb. 2, employers all over Chowan County will be participating in the seventh annual National Groundhog Job Shadow Day by bringing students into the workplace for a firsthand look at how the skills they learn in school are relevant to the real world. Helping America's youth understand the value of work, and what choices and benefits it brings with it, is a critical part of their learning process.

It's easy to get involved. If you'd like to host a student in your workplace on Monday, Feb. 2, please call Julie Perry, School Counselor, Chowan Middle School, (252) 221-4131. Give a job shadow a place in the sun!



Kermit Layton, left, gestures for his wife Laney to join him at the podium as they are introduced by John Dowd, right, as joint recipients of the Businessperson of the Year award at the annual Edenton-Chowan Chamber of Commerce dinner. (Staff photo by Angela Perez)

## Chamber honors local businesses at gathering

BY SEAN JACKSON  
Staff Writer

A business couple was tapped as the Business Persons of the Year at the annual Edenton-Chowan Chamber of Commerce banquet on Jan. 22.

Kermit and Laney Layton were presented the John A.

Mitchener Jr. award by John Dowd. The Laytons own Edenton Office Supply on South Broad Street. The business was flooded by Hurricane Isabel on Sept. 18, but was reopened shortly thereafter.

In addition, Johnson Biggs, an employee with the Town of Edenton, was named Young

Business Person of the Year. However, not all the winners of the William P. "Spec" Jones Volunteer of the Year Award were on hand. Turns out that all 14,000-plus citizens of Chowan County were chosen for that award, due to resi-

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## Council to pay for Partnership repairs

BY SEAN JACKSON  
Staff Writer

The Edenton Town Council moved ahead Monday night with plans to refinance a new and existing loan to pay for repairs to a town-owned building damaged by Hurricane Isabel.

With an estimated \$225,000 to the Water Street Building—leased to the Northeast Partnership prior to the Sept. 18 hurricane—Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton sought to refinance an existing \$105,856 in debt from renovations to the building in the mid-1990s. Knighton also sought to borrow money to pay for storm-related damage to the building, once the home of the Edenton Police Department.

But staff from the N.C. Local Government Commission balked at Knighton's plan and suggested a 1-cent tax hike, which would raise an estimated \$25,000 annually.

"They wanted to keep our

existing debt at what it was," Knighton said. Last week, Knighton met with LGC and again proposed borrowing new dollars to pay for the repairs. That money would be

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