

School bus mishap results in injuries

By SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

A Chowan Middle School custodian suffered only minor injuries from a two-vehicle accident on N.C. Highway 32 North last Wednesday morning (Feb. 4).

Vernon Privott, a substitute school bus driver, was traveling south on N.C. 32 when a car driven by Mirma Portillo, 23, of Elizabeth City, pulled out in front of him at the Small's Crossroads intersection at 6:50 a.m. The bus flipped over on its right side before coming to rest in the highway. Privott, of Tyner, and Portillo and a passenger in her car, Angel Dinoro, 24, also of Elizabeth City, were taken to Chowan Hospital where they were all treated and released.

There were no students aboard the bus at the time of the accident.

"Naturally, we were very much relieved that there were no serious injuries involved in the accident," schools Superintendent Allan Smith said Friday.

The bus, No. 108, is currently undergoing extensive repairs, Smith said. The state has supplied a replacement bus for the school to use, the superintendent added.

"It's going to take some time to repair the bus," he said.

The bus sustained an estimated \$35,000 in damages, according to a report filed by N.C. Highway Patrol Trooper J.H. Blizzard. Portillo's vehicle sustained \$5,000 in damage. She



A Chowan County school custodian, who also serves as a substitute bus driver, was injured in a two-vehicle accident on Hwy. 32 North after the bus he was driving was struck by a car driven by an Elizabeth City resident. (Staff photo by Jerry Swanner)

allegedly pulled out in front of Privott while travelling west through the intersection. The bus's rear left tires ran over Portillo's car, Blizzard's report stated.

Portillo has been charged with failure to yield at a stop sign.

Smith said the schools' transportation department has a good safety recording

with taking students to and from schools.

"Safety is our first priority in transporting students," he said.

Parents were notified Wednesday, via letters, of the accident, Smith said. Students who were to ride bus 108 Wednesday morning were taken to school by an alternate bus, school officials have said.

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**Lowe:
Delay
not a
surprise**

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

For the second time in as many even-year election cycles, the state Board of Elections has pushed back the state's scheduled primary date.

The elections board unanimously approved canceling the initial May 4 date. The primaries are now set to be held July 20.

The postponement also pushes back the filing period, which had been set to open at noon Monday. Candidates will now have to wait until April 26 to file. The new filing period closes May 7.

The new voting schedule allows absentee voting to begin May 31.

The general election date remains Nov. 2.

However, caucuses for the state Democratic Party's presidential-election delegates will be held April 17.

The primary date had originally been set for May 4.

Locally, Chowan County commissioners Harry Lee Winslow (District 1), George Jones (District 2), Ralph Cole (District 3), and Jerry

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Mardi Gras coming

Come jazz it up New Orleans style at the Chowan Regional Hospital Foundation's second casino-style Mardi Gras Madness fundraiser featuring a Silent and Live auction of items donated by generous sponsors.

You will be tempted by delicious heavy hors d'oeuvres served up by Chero's Nancy Hagen and mouth-watering desserts by Lorraine Brucia. Listen to cool jazz as you heat up the night with fun casino-style games provided by entertaining croupiers — all for a great charitable cause. Proceeds from the event will be used to purchase biphasic defibrillators for Chowan Hospital.

Your \$50 per person ticket entitles you to food, one drink ticket and one ticket for a chance to win one of three

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Suzie Swanner won a free dinner at Waterman's Grill for participating in a recent opinion survey on smoking in the restaurant. Pictured from left to right are: Katie Ebersole, co-owner, Jean Bunch, CRHCF Coordinator, Suzie Swanner, BB&T employee, and Brian Roberts, co-owner. The dinner was sponsored by CRHCF. (Photo by Angela Perez)

Smoking survey finished

BY ANGELA PEREZ
Staff Writer

After collecting 391 surveys at Waterman's Grill, the Chowan Regional Health Care Foundation (CRHCF) has concluded that the restaurant's patrons prefer a total smoke

free environment. As part of its strategy to decrease second-hand smoke exposure in homes, workplaces, and restaurants, CRHCF Program Coordinator Jean Bunch, approached Waterman's Grill owners to ask if they would agree to participate in the sur-

vey. In an effort to better serve their patrons, Waterman's agreed. From December 9th - Dec. 31, 2003, surveys were placed on tabletops. The results were tabulated on January 2, 2004 with the results

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Steamers' GM takes new job

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

After just four months as head of the Edenton Steamers front office, Jeff Roemer is leaving for a job in Major League baseball.

Roemer, whose last day as general manager of Edenton's Coastal Plain League is Friday, has said he planned to work in the big leagues. But the 25-year-old's decision to join the Toronto Blue Jays club was not an easy one.

"I was torn emotionally with the whole thing," Roemer said Tuesday, "because things could not be going better than they have in Edenton."

He had predicted a winning season for the Steamers. That forecast won't be affected by his leaving, Roemer said.

"We were headed in that (successful) direction on every front," he said.

A Princeton graduate and

former Tigers football player, Roemer will work out of the Blue Jays' baseball operations offices in Dunedin, Fla. — a town of nearly 36,000 just west of Tampa. He will not be working for Toronto's Class A minor league team, the Dunedin Blue Jays.

"I'll be working for the major-league club," he added.

During his 2-plus years with the CPL, Roemer has set his sights on big league baseball. He said the Blue Jays' organization offered him everything he was looking for.

"The Blue Jays are one of the fastest-growing and best-run team in the majors," he said.

Roemer says he will miss the personal relationships he has developed since arriving in Edenton in November.

"It's a special place," he said of the town, which has been home to the Steamers since 1998.

Local illiteracy focus of discussion group

BY ANGELA PEREZ
Staff Writer

Last week, the Edenton Discussion group sponsored a talk on illiteracy in Chowan County. Donna Koppelman, a local elementary school teacher, opened the discussion with statistics on adult literacy, citing numbers from the National Institute for Literacy (NIL).

In the NIL's most recent report from 1992, researchers estimated that within Chowan County, 65% of adults over 16 years of age are functioning at the two lowest levels of literacy levels that indicate possession



Donna Koppelman of only the most basic of skills. This high rate of low literacy

among adults, says Koppelman, affects literacy rates among children. "These children aren't seeing grown-ups reading at home," she said, "and that affects their reading levels and habits."

These nearly illiterate adults are at a great disadvantage in society, according to NIL. With such low literacy skills, they do not have access to the full range of economic, social, and personal options that are open to Americans with higher levels of literacy skills.

Another hot topic of discussion among those in attendance centered around a story in last

week's *Chowan Herald* about D.F. Walker and White Oak elementary schools pleading against a \$1.25 million grant aimed at improving reading among young adults. Many criticized 1st/2nd grade teacher Anne Ziemba's quote, "Why fix something if it's not broken?", exclaiming that given the lag behind other North Carolina schools in end-of-year testing, obviously something was broken within the Edenton/Chowan Schools.

In recent years, says the NIL, national and local policymakers, including members of county school boards, simply

don't have enough information available to them to help them understand the extent of the adult and child literacy problems.

John Onufrak, former professor and current speech therapist for Edenton-Chowan Schools, spoke after Koppelman, explaining that although some statistics may seem to indicate lags, the local school system has "really undergone some phenomenal change and improvement in the past few years."

The Edenton Discussion group meets every 1st and 2nd Thursday of the month at Acoustic Coffee.

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