

# THE CHOWAN HERALD

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## State Supreme Court holds historic session

### Lake presides over 'history in making'

BY SEAN JACKSON  
Staff Writer

It seemed like a John Grisham movie, but it was real history in the making.

With a bang of the gavel, the state Supreme Court filed into the Chowan County Courthouse on East King Street at 9:32 p.m. last Friday. It was the first time the state's highest court had held session outside of Raleigh in 144 years, since a trip to Morganton in August 1860. It was also the reopening of the 237-year-old courthouse after more than a decade of renovations.

Chief Justice I. Beverly Lake Jr., one of six justices on hand for the 3-hour-long special session, said he'd promised to bring the court to Edenton. It took 12 years, but Lake kept his promise.

"We're really happy to (hold session) in this beautiful city of Edenton," Lake said from the elevated, U-shaped bench just prior to the morning's first arguments on a death-penalty case.

"We're pleased and honored to be here," Jill Hickey, an attorney for the state in the day's second case, said. "It's a lovely courthouse."

A \$3.2 million facelift brought the Georgian struc-

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Staff photo by Earline White

Chowan County Clerk of Court Mike McArthur joins Chowan Sheriff Fred Spruill, Chowan County Commissioner Chair Louis Belfield, and dignitaries throughout North Carolina in cutting the ribbon marking the official reopening of the 1767 Chowan County Courthouse. The Re-Awakening celebration continued through the day with a special session of the Supreme Court, a public presentation and concluded with the hundreds of attendees touring the courthouse.

### Officials, citizens join in celebration

BY EARLINE WHITE  
Staff Writer

The restored Chowan County Courthouse was once again the site of celebration on Friday, October 8th. As the bell chimed twice, dignitaries, local government officials and the public came together to rejoice in the grand reopening of the 1767 national historic landmark.

The procession was led by the town crier, Wrenn Phillips, followed in spectacular color and sound by the Colonel John Harvey Colonial Color Guard. Hundreds of onlookers parted to make way for the once common but now nostalgic sight. Phillips then made the call to the green and proclamation.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given by Sandra Sperry, Regent and Beth Taylor, Past Regent of the Edenton Tea Party Chapter of the National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution.

Wrenn Phillips recited the Toast to the Old North State. NC State Representative William T. Culpepper, III, Master of Ceremonies gave welcome to the crowd and those visitors who came to town for such a splendid occasion.

Chairman of the Chowan County Board of Com-

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## Texas lawmen nab suspects from Edenton

BY SEAN JACKSON  
Staff Writer

Two Edenton men were arrested in Texas on drug and weapons charges Sept. 30.

Dontay Fleming, 20, of 152 Shannonhouse Road, and Paul Gregory Jr., 37, of 115 Birch Lane, were stopped for speeding by Texas Highway Patrol Trooper Jason Taylor, Edenton Police Chief Greg Bonner said. Taylor received consent to search the 1996 Ford Windstar van the men were travelling in while in Texas. Taylor found six kilograms of cocaine and a .357 handgun in a hidden compartment in the floorboard under the console, Bonner stated. They were charged with trafficking cocaine and weapons possession.

Both were leaving the Houston, Texas area, heading back to Edenton, Bonner said Monday. The cocaine had an estimated street value of more than \$600,000. They were confined in Montgomery County Jail after being arrested on the federal charges.

## Voters will have final word on merits of Amendment One referendum

BY SEAN JACKSON  
Staff Writer

Richard Bunch is certain that voters should approve the Amendment One measure on Nov. 2. John Sams feels just the opposite.

Bunch, executive director of the Edenton - Chowan Chamber of Commerce, and Sams, a vocal opponent of the amendment and also a candidate for a seat on the Chowan County Board of Commissioners, were both asked to clarify their stances on the issue by *The Chowan Herald* this week.

The amendment is being touted as a way, through the use of self-financing bonds administered by local governments, to bring jobs, new industry, and affordable housing to North Carolina. The state Constitution would have to be amended to allow such bonds, which currently 48

**BALLOT REFERENDUM**

*Constitutional amendment to promote local economic and community development projects by (i) permitting the General Assembly to enact general laws giving counties, cities and towns the power to finance public improvements associated with qualified private economic and community improvements within development districts, as long as the financing is secured by the additional tax revenues resulting from the enhanced property value within the development district and is not secured by a pledge of the local government's faith and credit or general taxing authority, which financing is not subject to a referendum; and (ii) permitting the owners of property in the development district to agree to a minimum tax value for their property, which is binding on future owners as long as the development district is in existence.*

other states use.

"I am sure the measure will allow local politicians to act more quickly," Sams said. "But the NC Constitution set up a barrier to politicians incurring debt without permission of the people who will have to pay that debt, and I think it is a bad mistake to give up this right."

"In addition," Sams added, "once this measure removes Constitutional protections, the new law can easily be amended by a simple act of the legislature, which can gut any 'protections' which appear to safeguard the public. Arguments for A-1 boil down to 'Trust us, we'll do what's right.' Drafters of the NC Constitution knew

better." Bunch said Sams' thinking is flawed.

"John is wrong," Bunch said Tuesday. "Amendment One is all about jobs and he's missing it. These (bonds) pay for themselves. He's wrong when he tells you it's a tax increase."

Nearly 300 agencies in North Carolina — from the state branch of the NAACP, a teachers' association, and a labor union — and former Govs. Jim Holshouser, Jim Hunt, and Jim Martin have all publicly supported the ballot measure. Richard Bunch's Chamber board has also formally supported voter approval of the amendment.

"We unanimously approved this," Bunch said. He said his staff and the board trusts local government — including Edenton

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## Annual Law Enforcement Banquet is Oct. 21st

The 34th annual Chowan County Law Enforcement Appreciation Banquet will be held Thursday, Oct. 21, at the American Legion Post 40, 1317 West Queen Street, Edenton. Social will begin at 5:30 p.m.

and the banquet at 7 p.m. Tickets are available at Post 40, Chowan County Sheriff's Office, Clerk of Court's office, Edenton Police Department, Famous Subs, Colony Tire or by calling 482-4057.

Highlights of the evening will include the recognition of an officer for his/her work with the youth of our community sponsored by the Chowan-Edenton Optimist Club and the recognition of the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

Guest speaker for the event will be James J. Coman, Senior Deputy Attorney General, Department of Justice, Raleigh, NC. He supervises a number of offices within the Attorney General's Office, including the Special Prosecutions and Law Enforcement Liaison sections. Coman is currently the chief prosecutor for the Attorney General's Office specializing in public corruption cases and also serves as special counsel to the North Carolina Judicial Standards Commission, which prosecutes judges accused of violating the canons of judicial conduct.

Coman has been with the Department of Justice since 1985. He served previously as the Senior Deputy Attorney General in the Criminal Division from 1985-1993 and as di-



Coman

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Edenton grounds Nighthawks



Staff photo by Ashley Misseri

## Resource team visits

Members of the Main Street Resource Team prepare for a trolley tour of Edenton Tuesday morning. On Thursday evening they will present the results of their fact-finding mission during a public presentation at Swain Auditorium, at 7 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

## Tobacco buyout may result in price decline

From Staff and Wire Reports

The U.S. Senate ended two years of fierce debate about the fate of tobacco farmers Monday, voting to halt federal price supports for leaf growers that had been in place since the 1940s.

The tobacco quota buyout will funnel \$10.1 billion — including \$3.8 billion, or nearly 40 percent of the total to Tar Heel farmers — to tobacco farmers, land owners and renters who took part in the industry. Farmers can continue to grow leaf, but prices could dip

sharply without government price support.

Mike Williams, farm extension director for Chowan County, agrees that prices could fall, even in Chowan County.

"It depends on how the contracts are offered," by tobacco companies to growers, Williams said of the future profitability of growing leaf in Chowan in the wake of the buyout.

Williams said between 200 and 300 acres of tobacco was

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**LOBSTERS ARE COMING!**  
 Kiwanis Club Lobster Sale October 16th \$15.00 ea. Cooked or Raw