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Center Hill-Crossroads receives higher skills rating

BY SEAN JACKSON
The Chowan Herald

TYNER — Northern Chowan County residents may owe the Center Hill-Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department more than a thank you for their firefighting skills.

The 36-member department has received a new fire-insurance classification, which could reduce premiums for homeowners in that fire dis-



Nixon

a ceremony at the station attended by nearly 60 firefighters, county offi-

cial, family, and residents. "It will be thousands of dollars we'll save for the people of the northern end of Chowan County," Louis Nixon, the department's fire chief, said during

district," a Jan. 6 press release from the state Fire Marshal's office stated.

"I'd like to congratulate Chief Nixon for his department's performance and for the hard work of all the department members," Long stated in that release, "the citizens in (the) Center Hill-Crossroads Fire District should rest easy knowing they have a fine group of firefighters protecting them and their property in case of emergency."

"... A higher rating does suggest that a department is overall better equipped to respond to fires in the

district," a Jan. 6 press release from the state Fire Marshal's office stated.

"I'd like to congratulate Chief Nixon for his department's performance and for the hard work of all the department members," Long stated in that release, "the citizens in (the) Center Hill-Crossroads Fire District should rest easy knowing they have a fine group of firefighters protecting them and their property in case of emergency."

"I want to thank everybody that has helped make our department a success, the citizens of Chowan County, and the county commissioners," Nixon said. "(Edenton-Chowan emergency services director) Doug Belch has played a large role in this" reclassification.

The firefighters themselves, 29 of which were on hand Monday night at

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Stokes: A 'veteran's veteran'

BY REBECCA BUNCH
The Chowan Herald

George Stokes may have been small in stature, but he was always a force to be reckoned with. The driving force behind construction of the Chowan County Veterans Memorial, Stokes died Sunday at age 81.

Stokes was a familiar sight to many during the years he lived here, with his white hair, talkative manner, and ever-present cigar. But he was known for other

things as well. Chowan County Manager Cliff Copeland remembered Stokes Tuesday morning as a man with a dry sense of humor and a strong sense of purpose. He recalled that Stokes' cigar smoking bothered some of his colleagues in the county office building when Stokes was serving as local representative for veterans' affairs, and that there were complaints about it. But, as Copeland laughingly noted, Stokes "could really turn on the charm when he wanted to, and that's exactly what he did. Within a very short time, George became the most popular person on that floor. I guess you could say he went from the basement to the penthouse in about two weeks."

Copeland also recalled the day that Stokes showed up at his office to announce that he thought Chowan County needed a Veterans Memorial. Copeland said he was waiting to hear George ask for the county's help in securing funds for the project. Instead, Stokes started by stating in a very determined tone of voice, that he intended to make sure the site was built and paid for and that he was not expecting the county to foot the bill. And once the memorial was completed, Copeland said, Stokes became, in effect, its keeper. "He was always

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MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGH



Contributed photo courtesy of Angela Perez

The robotic "arm" shown above is part of the da Vinci Surgical System, which allows surgeons to work at a smaller scale than conventional surgery permits. It's designer, Dr. W. Randolph Chitwood, spoke at Chowan Hospital Thursday evening. Chitwood founded the Cardiovascular Center at Pitt County Memorial Hospital in Greenville, NC. Since that time, Chitwood and his talented team of surgeons have collectively performed over 16,000 surgeries.

World-renowned heart surgeon pays a visit to Chowan Hospital

BY ANGELA PEREZ
Contributing Writer

It is a rare opportunity for Edenton to play host to superstars. But last Thursday evening, one of the world's superstars of heart surgery, Dr. W. Randolph Chitwood, chief of cardiothoracic and vascular surgery at Pitt County Memorial Hospital's (PCMH) Cardiovascular Center and senior associate vice chancellor of health sciences at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina

University (ECU), paid a visit to Chowan Hospital.

Chitwood, as guest speaker, discussed both his innovations in robotic heart surgery, known specifically as the da Vinci Surgical System, and the \$210,000,000 Eastern Carolina Cardiological Institute that has been slated to begin construction in either late 2005 or early 2006.

Invoking the American spirit of progress and change, Jeffrey N. Sackrisson, president of Chowan and Bertie Memorial

hospitals, introduced Chitwood, citing quotes from former president John F. Kennedy's 1962 speech "We Choose to Go to the Moon."

Even during these technologically advanced times, "the vast stretches of the unknown and the unanswered and the unfinished still far outstrip our collective comprehension," quoted Sackrisson. "But," he continued, "Kennedy assured his fellow Americans that man,

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Commissioners, BOE try to find common ground



Staff photo by Earline White

County Commissioner (and retired educator) Ralph Cole, at left, talks with Board of Education Chairman Gene Jordan and Commissioner Bill Gardner (at right).

BY EARLINE WHITE
The Chowan Herald

The progression and direction of our local school system from 'good' to 'great' was a topic of utmost concern at the informal work session between the Chowan County Commissioners and the Edenton-Chowan Board of Education. The two boards met on Monday to discuss the future of the school system and possible ways to 'hammer out issues' from within.

Dr. Allan Smith, Superintendent welcomed the group and reminded everyone that the meeting was a means to stimulate thoughts about our local schools and students' needs. "We have to compete not only with schools in northeastern North Carolina, but ones throughout the state and the nation. We need to think about ways to keep up with those schools that have more money and resources" than Edenton-Chowan schools. Smith continued, "We are at a crossroads. Our system has made a lot of gains, for example, in the area of technology. D. F. Walker was one of 50 schools chosen as a NASA Explorer School. We have made considerable measures in student achievement as well. In 1999, only one half of third graders were reading at or above grade level. We as a system began to focus on improving literacy and made sure every teacher at every level was a teacher of reading. This past year, 80 per cent of third graders are reading at or above grade level. During this session we hope to gather a shared view on the direction and how we may further improve the educational services for the boys and girls of Chowan County. We need to gain input from everyone on future priorities to take the schools to the next level," Smith said.

Cliff Copland, Chowan County Manager, gave the county's perspective in dealing with the

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The Good News Puppets make everyone smile

Judge Boyle issues 'landmark' court decision on OLF

BY EARLINE WHITE
The Chowan Herald

The citizens of Washington and Beaufort counties are rejoicing as the Navy finds itself losing ground for a second time in its bid for the outlying landing field. Federal Judge Terrence Boyle of the US District Court in NC granted a permanent injunction against the Navy, barring any further planning, development or construction of the OLF without yielding first to the National Environmental



Boyle

Policy Act. Should the Navy appeal the decision, the case will be heard in the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals

in Richmond, VA.

Boyle called the study done by the Navy to place the touch and go airstrip in Washington and Beaufort counties "incomplete". His decision stemmed from the failure of the Navy to make an objective determina-

tion of the impact on the surrounding environment of the proposed site. Boyle has ordered a stop to all activities and sent the Navy to reevaluate its "flawed" environmental analysis.

The suit against the Navy was filed over a year ago in hopes to protect the nearby Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, a habitat for over 100,000 swans, geese and tundra fowl. Last April a preliminary injunction ceased work on the landing field and denied the Navy a motion to reconsider. The training field was to

be located only a few miles from the refuge. Over 31,000 landings and take-off were scheduled to fly per year from the proposed OLF. Low-flying jets would pose a hazard to the wildlife and the jet pilots during take off and landing. Furthermore, any attempts to make the area "safer" would only damage the wildlife refuge.

Lawyers from the Southern Environmental Law Center represented Audubon joined by Defenders of Wildlife, and the North Carolina Wildlife Federation in hopes to stop the

OLF's construction. Their arguments were based on the Navy's downplaying of the environmental impact the jet landing field would have and the "reverse engineering" of the required Environmental Impact Statement to fit the Navy's desired outcome. The affected counties in North Carolina also filed their own suit.

"This landmark court decision confirms what we have said all along: this is not a safe place for a jet landing field,"

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