

THE CHOWAN HERALD

Vol. LXXII, No. 47

Wednesday, November 30, 2005

Single Copies 50¢



About 200 jobs are expected to be affected by a planned restructuring of operations at the Weyerhaeuser plant in Plymouth (above).

Weyerhaeuser to cut jobs at Plymouth

BY SEAN JACKSON
The Chowan Herald

After 57 years of operation, the Weyerhaeuser plant in Plymouth is slated to shut down a major machine, a move likely to cause a ripple among the plant's workers from Edenton and Chowan County.

The Federal Way, Wash.-based company announced Tuesday that it would "indefinitely" stop production centered around its 350,000-ton-per-year containerboard machine at the plant in Washington County, which began operating in 1948. That move would affect roughly 200 workers at the plant.

In a Tuesday press release, company chairman, president and CEO Steven Rogel indicated it was a difficult — but necessary — move for his company.

"We realize this is harsh news for our people in Plymouth," Rogel stated, "but difficult business conditions make it necessary. We will continue to refine our portfolio of businesses and facilities to improve our return to shareholders."

The news comes in the wake of falling jobless claims in North Carolina. The state's unemployment rate dipped to 5.3 percent for the month of September, according to Nov. 18 statistics from the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, the agency's most recent numbers. Washington County's jobless rate that month was above the state average, 6.6 percent.

It was not clear by press time Tuesday how many employees from the Plymouth plant commute from Edenton and Chowan County.

"I don't have that answer, and I probably won't,"

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Banquet recognizes Agriculture's vital role

BY EARLINE WHITE
The Chowan Herald

Since 1926 farmers from both ends of Chowan County have been coming together for Farmer's Night to recognize what the world may not; that without the sweat and back-breaking work tilling, plowing, planting and harvesting, life as we know would not exist. On Tuesday, November 22 over a hundred farm families feasted in fellowship at the Farm-City Banquet recognizing those that have made a meaningful contribution to the farming industry.

Agriculture has long played



Staff photo by Earline White

Farm-City Award winners, from left: Outstanding Jr. 4-H'er Kyle Forehand; 2004 Peanut Champion Jimmy Forehand (and J.C. Forehand, not pictured); John Butler Byrum, accepting Outstanding Woman in Agriculture honors on behalf of his wife, Nina Jane Byrum, who was unable to attend; Outstanding Young Farmer, Curtis M. Byrum III; and Outstanding Sr. 4-H'er, Kaitlin Bunch.

a vital role in North Carolina and Chowan County, Mike Williams, Director of the Chowan County Cooperative Extension office, said. "You only have to stop and think about what North Carolina would be like without agriculture and agribusiness: about 18 of every 100 jobs in our state wouldn't exist, nearly \$60 billion a year would not pump into our economy, turkeys and sweet potatoes might not be on our holiday menus, and our quality of life and the comforts we take for granted would be drastically different."

Most in attendance could not imagine life without farming;

many grew up as children of farmers themselves, now plowing the same land their grandfathers did before them.

Speaker David Jordan, peanut specialist with NCSU and a native of Chowan County, knew the lifestyle very well. Like most, Jordan grew up in a farming family, but instead of tilling the soil himself he decided to study the art of farming with the idea of helping others. Jordan spoke to the crowd on his work to help the natives of Ghana, Africa increase their peanut crop yield.

Jordan talked of the major

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Local businesses report strong sales on 'Black Friday', weekend



Vaughans and other retailers saw a surge in business over the Thanksgiving weekend, starting on Black Friday, when shoppers began making Christmas purchases.

STAFF PHOTO BY EARLINE WHITE

BY EARLINE WHITE
The Chowan Herald

"I've never seen that many people in the store at one time," Jo Gummere, manager of Shoppes on Broad, said Monday following the crazed rush on Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving; historically one of the busiest retail shopping days of the year. "Black Friday", traditionally the day when retailers get back "in the black" (profitable) after operating "in the red" during the previous months, rushed upon Edenton with force this year. But it wasn't the locals who hurried out to buy Christmas decorations, toys and clothes. It was the visiting families and traveling tourists who strolled down the street, shopping bags in hand.

"It (the foot traffic/customers) didn't stop from the time I opened the doors at 9:30 a.m. until I left at 6 p.m.," Gummere said of Friday's run. "Needless to say I went to bed practically as soon as I got home."

All day long Friday, happy busy shoppers wandered the streets. Many were with family members they had come to the area to see. No empty parking spaces were to be found, anywhere. And they shopped from one end of Broad to the other, and back again down the other side.

Karen Kane, co-owner of Boutique 210, noticed the increase of commerce on Wednesday. "We had a lot of people stop in the day before Thanksgiving. Family members visiting and a lot of locals preparing for guests," Kane said.

Patsy Faircloth, manager of Byrum Crafts, can relate. "The whole week before and after Thanksgiving is our biggest time of the year. This year we took in more (money) than ever before that I can remember (on Black Friday). In fact, I don't think we've ever gone over what we took in on that one day."

Likewise, Sound Feet Shoes' sales increased 25% from last year on the day after Thanksgiving. Store manager Mickey Willard added that the trend continued through the entire weekend. "We did three times as much business on Saturday as we did Friday."

Chrissy Hood at Edenton Bay Trading Company agreed. "Sales were unbelievable both Friday and Saturday with a good mixture of both locals and visitors to the area. It was a non-stop flow all day Friday; even better than last year and that was

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Culpepper resigns from NC House

Legislator to serve on NC Utilities Commission

BY REBECCA BUNCH
The Chowan Herald

Since 1993, Rep. Bill Culpepper of Edenton has served in the North Carolina House of Representatives. Now, someone else will be representing House District 2, which includes Chowan, Dare, Washington and Hyde counties.

Effective Jan. 1, Rep. Culpepper will begin an 8-year term on the NC Utilities Commission. To accept the post, Culpepper will have to close his law office in Edenton and resign his seat in the legislature.

In an interview Tuesday, Culpepper told *The Chowan Herald* that he had loved serving in the General Assembly but thought it was time to move on "while I'm at the top of my game. I've far exceeded the modest goals I set for myself in 1993 when I was named to replace the late Pete Thompson. Obviously, I have mixed emotions...but personally and professionally, this is the right thing to do."

Culpepper's legislative career has encompassed serving as the chairman of the powerful Rules Com-



Rep. Bill Culpepper

mittee in the state House, as well as co-chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Justice and Public Safety. He has also served as co-chairman of the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee since 2003.

"Bill brings with him a wealth of legal and legislative experience," said Gov. Mike Easley, who announced the appointment. "His strong commitment and dedication to public service make him an excellent addition to the Commission."

House Speaker Jim Black expressed regret at Culpepper's impending departure but praised his record of service in the House. "Rep. Bill Culpepper is one of the brightest members of the Legislature and has served the people of North Carolina, and especially those in Eastern North Carolina, with the highest integrity during the past 12 years."

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Albemarle Chorale tunes up for Christmas

Emergency call from cell phone frustrated police efforts

Assault recorded on tape, but the location of caller was not available

BY SEAN JACKSON
The Chowan Herald

Edenton police Det. Sgt. Rhonda Copeland heard the helpless pleas of a Jackson Street woman allegedly being beaten by her boyfriend on Nov. 19, unable to do anything more than listen to the woman's protests to her attacker.

Three days after that harrowing 911 call, Copeland had arrested Mogazi Willie Lee on

a number of charges, including attempted murder. The victim was 6-months pregnant at the time of the attack. Lee is believed to be the father of the unborn child.

But it was the inability to locate the unidentified woman on the night of the attack that shook up Copeland, a veteran with the Edenton Police Department. The woman had used her cell phone to call central communications. Lee allegedly broke the phone and

with no address registering at the 911 center, officials were unable to determine the 21-year-old victim's location.

"I really hated leaving (work) that night not knowing ... if she was OK," Copeland said. "I'm so thankful that she did get away" from Lee.

Although Copeland recognized Lee's voice on the other end of the line during the attack, she was unable to arrest him on that evidence alone. Copeland arrested Lee on Nov.



Mogazi Lee

23 He had been released from prison in November 2004 after serving time for robbery and drug charges. Lee could be heard attacking the woman for about 20 minutes during the call, Copeland

said. He allegedly used his body to compress the victim's chest, which led to her suffering an asthma attack. Such maneuvers can also lead to

death, Copeland added. "This is something he learned in prison," Copeland said.

The woman, whom Copeland declined to identify because she is a domestic violence victim, and her 4-year-old daughter — who was in the home during the attack — walked from Jackson Street to Chowan Hospital in the cold early-morning hours of Nov. 19. The woman had gone into labor, but hospital workers were able to stop her

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