

# THE CHOWAN HERALD

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## Report says county 41st in taxes paid

BY EARLINE WHITE  
The Chowan Herald

The average North Carolinian paid \$17 more for local government's cost in 2003-2004 than they did one year ago, according to a recent report published by the John Locke Foundation. The report, *By the Numbers*, calculates tax burden for the average taxpayer for each county.

Chowan County ranked 41st out of all 100 counties in the state for the amount in taxes and fees paid to the local government (\$1,139.71 per capita) compared with Pasquotank at 28th (\$1,254.06) and Dare County which places the highest burden on their residents (\$3,572.61), according to the report. Gates County came in near the bottom, ranked 98th for \$683.37 per capita, while Perquimans was ranked 51st (\$1,085.91).

"I think some of these figures are misleading," Chowan County Manager Cliff Copeland said Friday about the top five tax burdening counties. "Consider Dare County, for example. The year-round population is around 40,000-45,000 people, but in the summer the population skyrockets in excess of 100,000. The property taxes and sales taxes collected from those 100,000-plus individuals and divided by the number of full-time residents (45,000) makes no sense. For these numbers to be more accurate the inclusion of sales and property taxes collected by non-residents will have to be taken out of the equation. In reality Dare County's tax burden for full-time residents is among the lowest in the state."

Copeland said he felt, however, that the numbers for Chowan County were about right.

"Chowan County does not have the seasonal population like that of Dare County so the numbers for us are pretty accurate. The numbers show that Chowan County is doing a

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## Aiming for office



Earline White/The Chowan Herald

Investigator Dwayne Goodwin, left, registers to run for the office of Chowan County Sheriff, as his boss, current Sheriff Fred Spruill, and Elections Supervisor Rebecca Lowe look on. Spruill is retiring at the end of his current term.



Sean Jackson/The Chowan Herald

Edenton Police Detective Sergeant Rhonda Copeland, top right, signs up to become a candidate for the Chowan County Sheriff's. Looking on are her campaign manager Jeff Knox, and Board of Elections Supervisor Rebecca Lowe.

## One's a deputy, one's a police detective... both want the chance to be your next sheriff

BY EARLINE WHITE  
The Chowan Herald

Chowan County Sheriff's Office Investigator Dwayne Goodwin officially threw his hat in the ring on Monday for the upcoming Sheriff's election.

Goodwin has been with the Chowan County Sheriff's Office since 1991 when he came on as part of the auxiliary force. From 1991 to 2000, he served as a Patrol Officer then became a State Certified Criminal Investigator. He has logged over 2,500 hours of law enforcement training, many of which have been in the area of Civilian Emergency Preparedness and Terrorism Security.

"Over the last fourteen years Dwayne has proven that his is up to the challenge (of being Sheriff). This job is a people's choice and I feel very fortunate to have an individual with his level of character, experience, and professionalism asking the citizens for the opportunity to serve us as our Sheriff," Sheriff Fred Spruill said.

Goodwin, who grew up in the Cannon's Ferry area of Chowan County, said he has learned much from working alongside Spruill.

"Sheriff Spruill has afforded me the opportunity to be a part of the decision making processes from which I have learned a great deal, especially about the administrative activities," Goodwin commented.

"Right now is an exciting time in Chowan County, especially with the growth that is occurring on each end of the county," Goodwin said Monday as he stood with his family and supporters, including Spruill, at the Board of Elections Office. "I think we have a great Sheriff's Office; I want to grow on that. I want to get more involved in the community watch programs, for example, and reach out to the community for their help and input."

Goodwin is involved in investigating everything from homicides to worthless checks. He pursues federal, state, and local violations; collecting and preserving

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BY SEAN JACKSON  
The Chowan Herald

Veteran Edenton Police Det. Sgt. Rhonda Copeland filed Monday for the soon-to-be-vacated Chowan County Sheriff's job, pledging to run a hand's-on department if she's elected to the post.

Copeland, 52, a Democrat, has spent the past 16 years with Edenton's police force, including the past two as head of the department's new investigations division. "I just want the voters to be aware that I'm very serious about this (sheriff's) position," she said shortly after filing at the Chowan elections board office.

"I'm very serious about fighting crime," she added. "That's number one on my priority list."

Copeland said she'd been considering such a bid, her first-ever run for elected office, for much of the past year. The more she thought about it, the more people approached her about becoming sheriff.

"I felt like it was the right time," she said.

Copeland will have at least one opponent in the May 2 primary, fellow Democrat and Chowan County Sheriff's Deputy Dwayne Goodwin, who also filed Monday to replace retiring Sheriff Fred Spruill. After 20 years as sheriff, Spruill has decided not to seek re-election for a sixth term in office.

Copeland is not hoping to sway voters in her favor because of her gender. If elected, however, she would be the county's first female sheriff.

"There are some people that think a woman should not be sheriff," Copeland said.

It's her years with the Edenton Police Department, and her passion for ensuring residents' safety in Edenton and Chowan County, that Copeland wants voters to take notice of. It's a job one has to love, Copeland added.

"You lose so much of you family life," she said. "You put up with a lot out there ... And you don't sign up to

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## Former police officer facing felony charges

Gardner on indictment: "I am innocent"

BY SEAN JACKSON  
The Chowan Herald

A former Edenton Police officer was indicted by a Chowan County grand jury on Feb. 6 for alleged felony possession of a prescription narcotic.

Nicole C. Gardner, of Edenton, was named on the indictment for alleged felony possession with intent to sell and deliver a schedule II controlled substance, oxycodone, also known as oxycontin.

Gardner was the focus of an Alcohol Law Enforcement investigation that led to the indictment, District Attorney Frank Parrish said Tuesday.

A total of 52 capsules were seized on Jan. 25th, allegedly in Gardner's possession. She was fired by the town the following day, according to Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton and Police Chief Greg Bonner.

Gardner was hired by the town in September 2004.

In an interview with *The Chowan Herald* at the newspaper's office Tuesday, Gardner said the charges are not true. "I am innocent," she said.

She added that she was not surprised that the grand jury found merit in the allegations. "(A) grand jury's only (presented) one side," of a case on which to make a decision, Gardner said, emphasizing that she has never had a prescription for oxycontin, and has never taken the drug.

"I've never seen it," she said of the pain-killer.

Oxycontin, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration Web site, is a narcotic drug approved for the treatment of moderate to severe pain.

"It resulted from a surveillance operation," Parrish said of the narcotics seizure. He declined to discuss additional details of the investigation.

Both Knighton and Bonner have also declined to discuss the incident, other than to confirm the fact Gardner was terminated from her job as a patrol officer with the town.

At press time, Gardner had not been arrested. According to court documents, ALE agent Rodney Parker issued an order of arrest for Gardner on Feb. 6.

Bonner said Tuesday that he understood ALE agents were making arrangements to arrest Gardner, possibly later that day.

Gardner said Tuesday that she had not been

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### Contact us

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## Chowan joins effort to save more heart attack victims

BY SEAN JACKSON  
The Chowan Herald

Chowan Hospital is one of 10 Eastern North Carolina hospitals aiming at speeding up treatment for heart attack patients.

Last week, area health care officials met at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University in Greenville to discuss potential methods to provide quicker care to heart attack patients. The regional group is part of a statewide consortium whose Reperfusion of Acute Myocardial Infarction (RACE) project seeks to boost the number of heart attack survivors.

It's that initial 60 minutes, or "golden hour," that is crucial to surviving a heart attack, said Chowan Hospital Emergency Department clinical

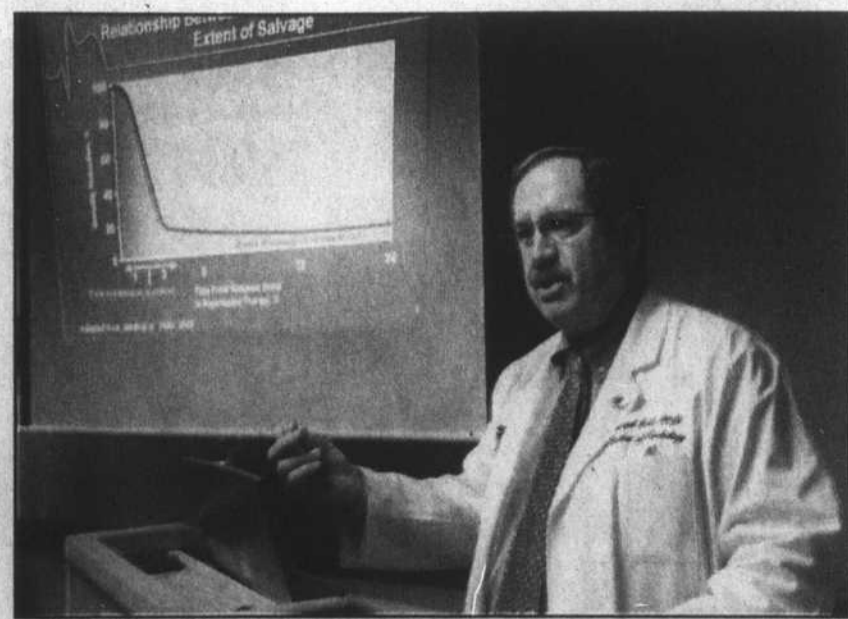
manager Mary Spruill. Unfortunately, many heart attack victims wait longer than that to realize what is happening to them.

"They (often) wait several hours before they come in," to the emergency room, Spruill said. "People don't want to admit they're having chest pains, and maybe a heart attack, and get to the hospital in a timely manner."

At the meeting in Greenville last week, health care officials echoed Spruill's concern.

"In North Carolina, people are not getting treated quickly enough...with artery-opening procedures by medication or mechanical devices," said Dr. Joseph Babb, a cardiologist and professor of internal medicine at ECU's medical school.

"Bringing patients through



The Daily Reflector

that golden hour is critical to saving lives," said Dr. Joseph Shiber, a clinical assistant pro-

fessor of emergency medicine at ECU's Brody School of Medicine.

According to an ECU press release, national registries

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