

# CHOWAN HERALD

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## Liberty and Freedom

Bill of Rights visits town as part of state tour

Community, C1

Violent acts prior to June 2006 in local schools are down See below

## Chasing the American Dream

Hispanics starting new lives, overcoming new obstacles in Edenton, Chowan



Earline White/The Chowan Herald

From left, Gelacio Vargas, Richard Cejka and Adrian Preciado spend a busy Friday night in the steaming kitchen at Mamasita's. Vargas, whose family owns a restaurant in Mexico, says that it's harder to open a business in his home country than in the states.

## Neighbors helping neighbors

Town program allows electric customers to help needy residents

BY SEAN JACKSON  
Staff Writer

Town officials began a program last year which was designed to allow some electric customers to help their needy neighbors.

And it paid off in a big way, according to numbers provided by Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton.

Last year, the town collected roughly \$8,500 for its Neighbors Keeping Neighbors WARM program.

Hopes are to match that total this year, Knighton said.

About 70 town utility customers — residents and businesses — made one-time contributions to the fund last year, Knighton said.

Another 24 customers make monthly contributions when paying their electric bills.

Once collected, the funds are turned over to emergency aid staff, which administers the program on behalf of the town.

"The funds can help senior citizens, disabled people, or those who have been laid off of work within the last 90 days," Knighton said. "It is a good program, and we are grateful for the generosity of our customers."

The town is continuing the program through at least 2007.

The Town Council adopted the program in late 2005, after Hurricane Katrina rocked the Gulf Coast region, sending fuel costs skyrocketing.

"The council is so good about responding when the community needs help," Knighton added.

In addition to soaring gas prices last winter, weather forecasters had called for a colder season than any seen in recent years.

While that forecast didn't hold true, councilors still anticipated that some customers could have difficulty paying their bills after the town raised its electric rates.



Knighton

## Second of two parts

BY SEAN JACKSON  
Staff Writer

They come here for the chance to work, to earn a steady living and raise their families with the hope of achieving the "American Dream."

They are the ever-expanding Hispanic community in Edenton and Chowan County.

Some work in the seafood industry that plies its trade in and around the murky waters of the Chowan River.

Some use a hammer and nails to make their living, helping to build the homes and businesses that are flourishing in the town and county.

Others come to work the fertile fields in Tyner, making their



Carrera



Acero

mark in the local farming trade.

Still others come for the schools, or to join family and friends who have already settled here.

"It's easy to make money here," Gelacio Vargas, Mamasita's manager, said.

Back in Mexico, Vargas' family owns a restaurant and a store. Vargas said it's harder to open a store in Mexico.

"In Mexico," he said, "you have to ask the government for approval to open a business. Here, it is much easier."

Always, there are those who are glad to have the growing Hispanic workforce in Chowan.

Rod Leary, of Leary Plant Farm in Tyner, employs a number of Spanish-speaking workers during his peak spring and summer growing seasons.

"They work very hard at their jobs here," he said. "There (are) hardly ever any complaints of the job being too hard."

The same holds true for Joey Nixon of Murray Nixon's Fishery. "Nowadays, the backbone of the American workforce is primarily Hispanic workers," Nixon said. "They take jobs doing what others won't and become great at what they do."

Edenton-Chowan Chamber of Commerce Director Richard Bunch agreed.

"They are an important part of our workforce," Bunch said. "We

have industries that are really benefiting from the skills and abilities of these citizens. You will be able to find our Hispanic population in all types of jobs in Edenton and Chowan County."

Another draw is the local schools system.

Zoraida Acero, co-owner of Goody's Convenience Store in Tyner, was already living in northeast North Carolina when she decided to move to Chowan so her children could go to school here.

"We came to America for our children," Acero said. "We wanted them to be able to compete with the smartest kids, to get them on the right foot and go on to a better life than they could have had in Colombia. We moved

See DREAM, Page A2 >

## Downtown stores may be destroyed to make way for new bank building

Snooker's, J.C. Penny, Royalty Finance may be forced to relocate

BY EARLINE WHITE  
Staff Writer

Three storefronts in downtown Edenton may meet their ends if a recent proposal from Southern Bank and Broad Street property owner, Dalton Furlough, is approved.

The proposal to demolish the building stretching from 200 to 204 Broad St. will be reviewed at the Feb. 12 meeting of the

Edenton Preservation Commission following a request from Southern Bank.

The demolition could be delayed 365 days, if the commission sees fit, and the architectural design for a new Southern Bank office could be further revised if requested.

Win Dale of J.C. Penny/Colonial Communication, one of the business owners that rent space in the Broad Street building, is currently looking for space to relocate should the move be necessary.

Wanda Westbrook of Snookers, another tenant, is waiting to see what happens and has no plans to

relocate as of now, she said.

Constructed for use as a grocery store in 1954, renovated as a pool hall and now serving as commercial offices for four businesses, the future of the space is currently in limbo.

The preliminary sketch of the proposed 1 1/2 story brick Southern Bank building is available for public viewing at the Edenton Planning and Inspections Office at 108 East King St.

The current sketch shows little detail but the project's architect is expected to submit another plan by Jan. 29 for review at the February meeting.

## Violence in schools, drop out rate down

BY EARLINE WHITE  
Staff Writer

Violent acts in the local school system last year were nearly three percent lower than other systems statewide.

The dropout rate is also the lowest it's been in five years, according to Rob Boyce, assistant superintendent.

The information was presented at the Board of Education meeting Monday night.

"Naturally we are pleased that there was a decrease in the number of incidents of crime as well as the number of dropouts during the 2005-2006 school year," said Superintendent of schools, Allan Smith.

"However, we must remem-

ber that one student not completing high school is one too many."

The reported violent acts data does not include incidents that have taken place this school year, including the three alleged weapons possession charges at Holmes this fall.

In 2005-2006 the majority of violent acts, eight, included incidents where students were in alleged possession of weapons other than firearms or explosives.

There was one charge of possession of a controlled substance and two reported assaults on school personnel, not

See SCHOOLS, Page A2 >

### INDEX

A Local  
Land Transfers ..... A4  
Opinion ..... A6

B Sports  
Recreation News ..... B1  
Nascar ..... B2

C Community News  
Upcoming Events ..... C2  
Society ..... C4  
Obituaries ..... C6  
Church ..... C7, 8

D Classifieds  
Buy/Sell/Trade ..... D1  
Service Directory ..... D2  
Employment ..... D4



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