



T.J. Weagly finds happiness in helping others A3



Randy Johnson helps Relay for Life efforts A2

SNOOKER'S GRILL

"It's been fun, and I don't want to leave ... We're like a family."
— Snooker's cook, Nancy Moore



LOCAL HOT SPOT CLOSING



Above, Wanda Westbrook chats with a departing customer while, at top, cooks Darius Moore and Nancy Moore serve the lunch rush.

Story and photos by Sean Jackson
Staff Writer

THERE COMES A DAY when you just know it's time for a change. Wanda Westbrook says.

After nearly a decade running a downtown Edenton eatery, Westbrook is calling it quits. It wasn't an easy decision for Westbrook to step away.

The doors will close for good at Snooker's Grill on July 25.

"We've made a lot of friends," Westbrook said during a break Monday between the breakfast and lunch rushes.

"People have been very good to me," she added. "It's been a good business. I just never thought we'd be as successful as we have been. We couldn't have done it without the local people."

Westbrook was already planning to sell the business when nearby Southern Bank decided to expand. It was just a good fit for all involved, she said.

"Snooker's has been fun," she said, "but you kind of know when it's time to change."

Westbrook's father, Joe Swanner, ran a drive-in restaurant, Joe's Drive-In, a few blocks up North Broad Street from 1950-69. She never worked there.

"I was 12 when he closed," Westbrook said.

She worked at brother Allen Swanner's gas station, Edenton Shell, for 22 years before opening Snooker's with partner Susan Furlough in 1997. Furlough left about three years later, and Westbrook has run Snooker's solo since.

While she'll dearly miss her patrons, she doesn't regret giving up the 5 a.m. arrivals to the eatery.

"It's hard work," she said of running a restaurant with a staff of 10.

A popular pool hall occupied the building prior to Westbrook and Furlough taking over — hence the restaurant's name, Snooker's, a type of billiard game.

Fond farewells

Snooker's fans are as sentimental as Westbrook about the closing. There will be no more of the popular omelettes and ham biscuits at breakfast, no burgers and cheesesteaks for lunch customers.

For Chowan County Manager Cliff Copeland, his morning coffee breaks at Snooker's will soon only happen in memories.

"I certainly hate to see them close," Copeland said as he sat with a colleague in his familiar back table Monday morning.

Copeland said his favorite dishes were Westbrook's baked potatoes and salads. She disagreed playfully with him, one of many of her regular customers.

"You always get cheeseburger and fries," Westbrook said.

While Westbrook joked around with Copeland, long-time employees Edie Sherwood and Pam Skinner helped close out the breakfast rush. Sherwood waits tables, while Skinner cooks up menu items.

"They've been here the whole time," Westbrook said. "I'm really going to miss them, too."

The Steamers Wall

As soon as you walk through the wood-framed glass front door, the sports memorabilia comes into view. Along the long wall to the left are jerseys from a host of local schools — John A. Holmes, Lawrence Academy, Chowan Middle, and D.F. Walker.

Then there's the wall to the right, Snooker's "Steamers Wall." More jerseys, yes, but the scrawled autographs that crawl over the wall are the most eye-catching mementos in the place.

It began in 1998, the Steamers first year in town, Westbrook said. Every year since, she said, players add their names to the eggshell-white wall.

"They've already signed it this year," Westbrook said.

The only hitch is how to preserve it. The wall is made of plaster and would likely crumble during any attempt to remove it, Westbrook said.

"I don't know how to save it," she said with a shrug.

Football fever

All three of Westbrook's children — sons Ryan and Joseph, daughter Ashley — played sports at Holmes for the Aces.

Snooker's often hosted booster club meetings, but the main event was the Friday-evening dinner in the fall for football players, cheerleaders, and trainers.

Aces head football coach Bob Turner said he'll miss that tradition this fall.

"She has always been very supportive," he said of Westbrook, "and was always able to make adjustments to meals or times if we needed her to."

Aces athletic director Jay Swicegood, himself a former football coach, agreed.

"With the closing of Snooker's, we will have to make some major adjustments," Swicegood said, praising Westbrook and her husband Waverley for years of support of Holmes sports.

Westbrook isn't sure what adjustments lay ahead for her. She plans to find work in the near future, she's just not sure yet what type of job she'll transition in to.

"I'll take a little time off," she said, stressing "little."

For hundreds of Snooker's customers over the years, Westbrook's time "on" at the restaurant has been a treat in more ways than one.

■ ALLEGED GUNMAN CAUGHT IN RALEIGH A4

■ STEAMERS SIZZLE WITH RECENT 5-0 STREAK B1

■ FIRST ASSEMBLY HOSTS HUNTING EXTRAVAGANZA C8

Farmers hit hard by lack of rain

Last year 15 inches of rain reported; this year 5.1 inches

By Rebecca Bunch
Staff Writer

As local residents swelter in the heat and humidity, farmers' fields are not faring much better.

The numbers tell the story.

In our community between May 1 and early July of last year, 15.2 inches of rain had fallen in our community; this year during that same time period, we've received 5.1 inches, according to rainfall information collected by Yates Parrish of Chowan County.

Farmers say they are pinning their hopes on irrigation and prayer.

"(Chowan County farmers) are in bad, desperate need of rain," says Emmett Winborne of Winborne Brothers Farms. "We could really use what I call a good root-soaker. We are hoping and praying for that." In the meantime, irrigation is helping keep the crops alive.

And Kenny Goodwin says the 1,800 acres he farms are "mighty dry."

Goodwin, like many others in the area, grows corn, cotton and peanuts.

And while he says he still holds out hope for his cotton and peanut crops to save the day, Goodwin estimates that 40 percent of the corn crop is damaged beyond repair because of the dry weather.

"We're irrigating what we can, but it's very expensive. I'm spending a minimum of \$20 an acre for irrigation, so that hurts us too."

Goodwin says that the Rocky Hock and Wingfield areas "are the worst I've seen."

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Local writing scores are up

By Earline White
Managing Editor

Seventh grade writing scores in Chowan County increased 30 points over last year, according to the department of public instruction.

"We were pleased to see the large gains in writing by students," Superintendent Allan Smith said.

"Their performance on the writing test is commensurate with the scores from across the state," he added.

Locally, the seventh graders scored 47 percent proficient on their spring exam. According to state data, their peers scored nearly 51 percent proficient.

The low score last year had school officials concerned, but they argued that standardized tests are not always the best way to access students' abilities.

This year's huge increase furthers the argument that the score may have been a fluke.

Fourth graders also showed improvement in writing this year, from 32.7 in 2005-2006 to 33.33 in 2006-2007. Fourth graders throughout the state scored 53 percent proficient.

Tenth graders inversely scored slightly lower than in 2005-2006, from almost 32.5 to 32.9 this year. Their peers across the state also showed a slight dip from 53.2 percent proficient in 2005-2006 to 51.4 this year.

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BBQ Beef Plates
or
BBQ Beef by the
Pound

Chowan Edenton Optimist Club

Fundraiser

Donation: \$7.00 per plate or \$7.00 per pound

Sat. July 14, 2007
11:00 am - 6:00pm
Pick-up at the
Boy Scout Hut