



More school funding cuts?

State may withhold fuel money for local school system

By Vernon Fueston
Contributing Writer

It's adding insult to injury as far as Allan Smith is concerned.



After making tough personnel cuts, Allen, the superintendent of Chowan County's schools, just isn't sure how he will deal with a possible cut in state funding of \$83,000 proposed recently by state education officials.

A letter from the state's department of instruction June 23 said the state is considering trimming \$50 million from the money local systems receive to cover the rising cost of diesel fuel.

Part of the money will also come from what the state gives local schools to cover promised teacher bonuses.

State poised to cut
"I don't want to say it's all doomed," Howard Lee, chairman of the state board of education said, "but I do want to sound an alarm and warning that we're heading in the wrong direction."

His remarks were printed in the Raleigh News and Observer.

A cut like that would be felt by the county's schools. Smith estimates the county will have to come up with just under \$83,000.

"That's dangerous," Smith said of the proposed cuts. "That comes to about \$34 per student."

The legislature will meet this week to consider the shortfall.

Hard choices
It comes down to hard choices. Teachers were promised bonus packages based on school performance and must be paid. But it's not as if the county can reduce bus transportation.

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Al Gustave uses his wood lathe to turn bowls, lamps and other items from wood others might burn. He's worked for years from the trees Hurricane Isabelle felled, but says the last of that wood is disappearing.

Craftsman fashions bowls, urns from decaying wood

By Vernon Fueston
Contributing Writer

"Your favorite is always the last thing you made," Al Gustave said as he held a bowl to the light.

The finish is a deep polyurethane that brings out the subtle shades in the wood.

The roots of four branches radiate out from the center of the bowl.

Art from firewood
Gustave makes bowls, boxes, and lamps from what others might burn for firewood.

"The wood you use for turning can be either very expensive, or it can be free," Gustave said.

He has been working for years from the aftermath of hurricane Isabel.

At first what he turned was fresh wood he salvaged as crews cleared the streets, but now the real treasures are turning up.

The best wood, Gustave said, is the product of decay.

"When you turn wood, you discover what's inside it," he said.

Gustave was holding a piece made from spalted

oak. "You can't buy spalted wood. It takes two years to develop the fungus that makes the black lines you see here."

The wood looks as if an artist drew a series of random, curved and jagged lines through the wood.

The lines are delicate, like those drawn with fine pen or brush tipped with India ink.

Intricate battle lines
A lot of trees felled by Isabel have reached their prime now. The rest have passed that stage and gone into decay.

Gustave harvests the fallen wood where it lays in the forests around Chowan County.

When turned, the wood reveals complex battle lines drawn up between the tiniest of armies.

The thin, jet black lines seem to be in motion, frozen in the wood.

"Different fungi fight each other for territory in the wood," he said. They seem to push against each other. That makes the lines."

While Gustave depends on nature to decorate many of his bowls and urns, others are meticulously laid out using several species.

Their colors form designs

in the work. One urn has a Grecian pattern, another has an American Indian motif.

Both were made by cutting segments of wood to exact dimensions and angles, then gluing it all up to form the desired shape.

He likes turning wood because he loves watching the process.

Nature is the artist and the lathe uncovers her work.

Two artists
"You can bring out the beauty and mystery of the wood," he said. "You can't see it any other way."

Sometimes, Gustave likes what he finds in the wood so much he takes a thin slice and frames it.

He's done that with pieces of spalted oak and a particularly stunning slice of rare, book-matched pheasant wood.

Gustave knows a thing or two about wood.

For 45 years he ran a custom furniture business in Arizona before retiring and moving to North Carolina.

He made desks and teller lines for banks, custom

furniture for homes, and display cabinets.

A new life
"I was a problem solver," Gustave said. "I used to go in and figure out what a customer needed and then go and make it."

"Since retirement, my whole philosophy is simply that I want to create."

He likes the lifestyle now. Gustave sells his turnings at craft shows around the region.

Some of his segmented bowls and urns sell for \$600 to \$1,200.

But Gustave's customers see his turnings as works of art and are willing to pay for it.

That art is part Gustave's and part the work Someone Else entirely.

Gustave must divide his time between creating and marketing his art, but it's worth it.

His new life does come with fringe benefits.

"I love it — no employees, no taxes, no regulations. I get up in the morning and decide what I'm going to do, turn, design, or take a nap."

Dems tap Gwen Brown

Republicans still weighing options for first district seat

By Vernon Fueston
Contributing Writer

In an unusual move, Democrats have filed a petition to run Gwendolyn Brown as an unaffiliated candidate against Republican Edward (Eddy) Goodwin.

Brown is the cafeteria manager at Chowan Middle School according to the school's Web site.

If Democrats have their way, the two could face off in November for a seat on the county's board of commissioners currently held by Bill Gardner, Jr.

In a related matter, Chowan Republican chairman Bob Steinburg said his party is still weighing its options regarding a candidate to run in the fall.

That candidate would run for the first district seat that opened up during the primary when Daryl Stallings withdrew from the race.

Democratic petition
A petition to run Brown in November as an independent, organized by the Democratic Party's leadership, was turned in to Edenton's election office Friday.

The office has 10 days to check the signatures for duplications, residence in the district and voter registration.

Brown said any formal announcement wouldn't be made until that process is complete.

If Brown does run, she will run in Chowan County's first district.

The first district covers the northern part of Chowan County including the precincts of Rocky Hock, Center Hill and Wardville.

"We had more signatures (on the petition) than we needed," Democratic chairwoman Martha Badger said, "but you never know how many will be disqualified for not living in the district or for other reasons."

Republican incumbent Gardner lost his primary bid against Goodwin in May.

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Rosie Wallio uses flash cards to teach her students about spending money wisely.

Making every day count

By Rebecca Bunch
Staff Writer

Davon Butler is hard to miss among the students in Rosie Wallio's Life Skills class at COA — especially when he's exercising furiously to one of Richard Simmons' "Sweatin' to the Oldies" tapes.

Arms and legs flying in all directions, he calls out, "I can't help myself," as his classmates scramble to give him plenty of room to move.

"He's like that in everything he does," says teacher Roslie Wallio. "He really puts his heart and soul into it."

Markeisha Blount isn't as vocal as Butler, but she's hard to miss when the dancing starts. She's the shy girl wearing the big smile.

"When Markeisha's dancing, you can tell how much she loves it," Wallio says. "She's always smiling."

Wallio loves coming to class, too.

Lured out of retirement several years ago to teach the class, she says she's glad she made that choice because she's needed.

Her students deal with challenges from blindness to speech impairments.

"When Steve Schmidt from

COA first called and asked me if I was interested," she recalls, "I was pretty reluctant to go back to work."

Today, though, she feels certain she is where she's supposed to be.

"This is where I'm supposed to be. This is my niche."

Wallio says all the fun in her class doesn't happen by accident. It's part of her plan to keep them motivated and interested in getting familiar with skills such as counting money and practicing good nutrition.

"I feel really motivated to make

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