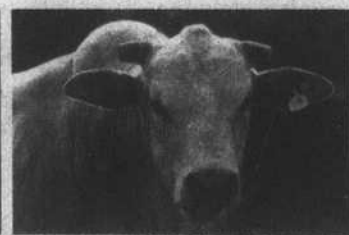
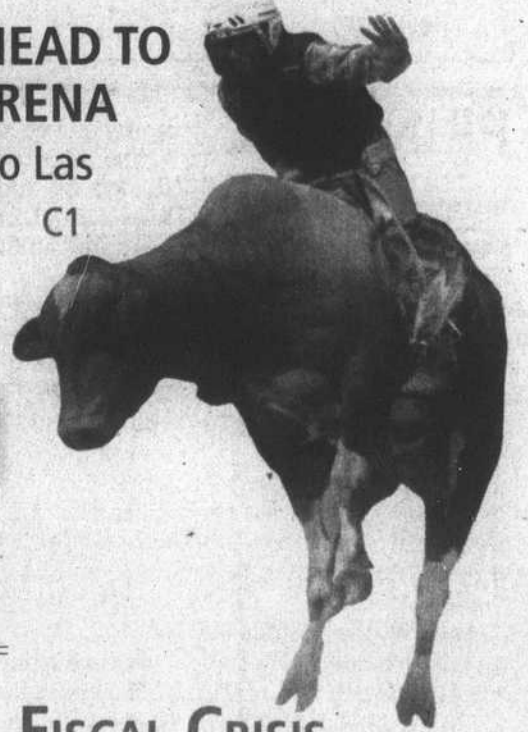


Edenton native makes Boston headlines with 'Touch the Sky' designer clothing line C6



ADRENALINE JUNKIES HEAD TO TOP NOTCH RANCH & ARENA  
Top Notch bull "Jap" heads to Las Vegas to compete nationally C1



# CHOWAN HERALD

482-4418

Wednesday, September 3, 2008

50¢

## White Oak welcomes new principal

By Rebecca Bunch  
Staff Writer

As a young girl, Amy Steinert always wanted to be the teacher when her friends in the neighborhood pretended to play school.

Today, she is White Oak Elementary School's new principal.

"My first real moment of knowing that this (being an educator) is what I was meant to do was in fourth grade," she said.



Steinert

"I had a teacher that truly changed my way of thinking... I have always tried to treat students in just the same special way that she treated me."

Her warmth and professional demeanor were among the qualities that helped her land the job, said Dr. Allan Smith, superintendent of schools.

"We feel certain that parents, staff and students will greatly benefit from her leadership," he said.

### Quality system

As director of elementary education and county testing director for the Camden County school system since 2006, Steinert had the chance to interact with educators from the Edenton-Chowan Schools.

Each time, she said, she came away convinced it would be a great place to work.

"Edenton-Chowan has always had exemplary schools," she said. "The teachers and others I met, you could just tell their quality."

Steinert added, "It (school system) just felt like a friendly place and a place I wouldn't mind coming to."

See PRINCIPAL, Page A2 >

### INDEX

- A Local**
  - Land Transfers.....A4
  - Editorial .....A5
- B Sports**
  - Recreation News.....B1
  - Nascar .....B2
- C Community News**
  - Upcoming Events.....C2
  - Society .....C3
  - Obituaries .....C4
  - Church .....C5,6
- D Classifieds**
  - Buy/Sell/Trade .....D1
  - Service Directory .....D2
  - Employment.....D4



©2006 The Chowan Herald  
All Rights Reserved

## CHICKENS PROVIDE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM AGAINST DISEASE

By Vernon Fueston  
Contributing Writer

Five chickens in William Davidson's Edenton back yard stand guard against the spread of three major viral diseases into the area as part of a statewide public health program. Now one of the birds is gone.

Only four of the five cages were occupied Friday. One bird has tested positive for the Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus (EEE) in a weekly blood test on the birds conducted by the town's environmental health department.

The virus affects horses and, occasionally, humans according to the Centers for Disease Control.

EEE does not produce disease in chickens, just an immune response according to Ralph Hollowell, Director of Environmental Health for the region.

The infected bird is not contagious and will live out its days in relative comfort on an area farm, he said.

The chickens serve as an early-warning system to public health authorities on the spread of Eastern Equine Encephalitis, the West Nile Virus and the "J" Virus, Davidson, a garage supervisor for the town, said.

Among Davidson's responsibilities is the town's mosquito control program. The viruses are spread by mosquitoes.

The birds are maintained by the town as part of a statewide program to monitor the spread of the diseases.

This is the second year the chickens have been kept by the town. The next nearest monitoring station is in Currituck, according to Davidson.

The program also has insect



Vernon Fueston

William Davidson, Garage Supervisor for the Town of Edenton, with one of the town's "Sentinel Chickens."

catching traps located around the county, testing mosquitoes for the viruses.

Davidson said only young virgin hens are used in the experiments to reduce any variables that could skew the results. The birds are provided by the State.

The chickens are tested weekly for antibodies against the diseases that would indicate exposure, according to Hollowell.

Public health officials check the chickens for antibodies in their blood weekly, drawing a sample from a blood vessel under the wing, he said. The laboratory tests for the virus are conducted by a lab in Raleigh.

Davidson said he was expecting the arrival of a replacement hen in a few days, filling out the population.

The town is advising citizens to take steps to avoid mosquito bites and reduce mosquito-breeding conditions around the home.

## Fiscal crisis may play big role in Chowan County's Nov. elections

By Bob Montgomery  
The Daily Advance

Chowan commission candidate Earl Willis says he used to tell his high school history students that political change can't happen without a strong two-party system.

Willis, a registered Republican who grew up in Dare County and taught school in Perquimans County, says he never had far to look to prove his point.

"The two-party system is not healthy in northeast North Carolina," Willis said, referring to the Democratic party's dominance in the region's politics.

"And the only way that would change is if good people were willing to give voters a choice."

Thanks to Willis and four other Republicans on the ballot this November, Chowan voters will have a choice of candidates when they go to the polls.

But it's because of Chowan County's ongoing financial crisis — the local

government dominated by Democrats suddenly found itself this summer \$3.8 million in the hole and continues to struggle to pay its bills — that Willis may finally get that two-party system he's been seeking.

Willis' opponent for Seat 1 in Chowan's District 3 this fall is Ralph Cole Sr., the commission board's chairman.

In any other year, unseating the chairman of the commission board in a county that has elected mostly Democrats would seem a nearly impossible task.

But maybe not this year.

Like most of the other Republicans on the Chowan ballot this fall, Willis, 60, believes citizens remain highly upset about the county's ongoing fiscal crisis and county officials' stewardship of Chowan's finances.

County commissioners learned only in July that, thanks to overestimates in revenue by the former county manager, Chowan had a \$3.8 million shortfall in the

current-year budget.

In response, commissioners were forced to raise the county property tax rate by 9 cents — from 56 cents to 65 cents — and cut county expenses by 10 percent.

Chowan commissioners also learned this summer that the county's former \$29 million nest egg — built with proceeds from the sale of Chowan Hospital a decade ago — had dwindled to \$700,000 over a five-year span.

They have authorized several investigations into where the hospital monies were spent and whether there was any wrongdoing in their expenditure.

But the county's former manager, Cliff Copeland, has said the funds were borrowed to pay the county's expenses and avert property tax increases. Copeland retired in June after 29 years, before the shortfall was discovered by the state Local Government Commission.

Throughout the crisis, a

See ELECTION, Page A2 >

## FISCAL CRISIS LGC to evaluate progress up 20% Early tax payments

By Vernon Fueston  
Contributing Writer

Chowan County's financial restructuring plan received either an up or down decision by the State yesterday, but the outcome was not available at press time.

After clearing several hurdles prescribed by the State's Local Government Council, the county presented a plan restructuring its debt payments on two major capital loans.

Chowan needs the debt restructuring to make its cash flow projections work and meet its monthly expenses.

County Manager Peter Rascoe said other pre-conditions for the debt restructuring were met by the county.

On Aug. 14 the commissioners passed a revision balancing the budget using revised revenue figures acceptable to the State. It was a compromise budget mixing cost-cutting measures with a realty tax increase.

Rascoe said passing the budget at that commissioner's meeting, a measure heatedly opposed by some, was necessary to get the debt re-structuring calendar on this meeting of the LGC.

Rascoe's plan reduces payments on two key loans from BB&T covering the construction of D.F. Walker School and the Northern Chowan Community Center.

The plan extends both loans from 15 years to 20, reducing the annual payments.

The \$9.95 million D.F. Walker loan was due for an annual payment of \$1.04 million on Sept. 29. If approved, a new payment of \$710,000 is scheduled for March 29.

A payment on the \$4.5 million community center loan was scheduled on April 31 of \$391,000. That payment was reduced to \$258,000.

Rascoe was optimistic about the county's chances for approval, citing its compliance with the LGC's suggestions.

"We have been working with the LGC at least three times per week on cash flow," Rascoe said. "We have not made any administrative decisions with finances unless the LGC has concurred with each of the things we have done."

The State could take over the county's financial responsibilities if it is unable to meet its cash flow requirements.

It has done that only four times in North Carolina since 1990 according to Sarah Lang, an LGC spokesperson.

In such instances, Rascoe See LGC, Page A2 >

County tax supervisor Lynda Hendrix said early tax payments have jumped to \$86,000 over last year.



Officials estimate county to be back in black by Nov.

By Rebecca Bunch  
Staff Writer

Chowan County should begin experiencing positive cash flow again soon, said County Manager Peter Rascoe.

"Right now, the state and county joint cash flow analysis shows the county should begin running in the black (by November)," Rascoe said.

Rascoe said a key element in the county's ongoing effort to recover from its budget shortfall has been the big increase in property taxes paid early this year.

Lynda Hendrix, county tax supervisor, said those payments have jumped about 20 percent — or \$86,000 — over last year this time.

She said that many of those who have come in have said they normally wait until the end of the year to pay their taxes.

But, she said, "they are telling us when they come in that they are making a special effort to pay early this year to help the county over this crisis."

Rascoe said that has been a tremendous help as the county has struggled to meet its weekly operating expenses.

"All citizens need to be extremely grateful to those property owners who have chosen to pay their taxes early," he said.

"By doing that, it allows the county to more easily meet its financial obligations, and therefore avoid having to consider incurring more debt."

### About paying

County tax bills for real and personal property must be postmarked before Jan. 6 in order for a taxpayer to avoid paying interest.

The Chowan County tax office is located in the County Office Building on East King Street.

Hours are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Taxes may be paid by cash, check or money order, debit/credit card.

Payments may be mailed to: Chowan County Tax Department, P.O. Box 1030, Edenton, N.C. 27932.



SHRINERS Annual FISH FRY

\$7.00 per Plate  
Eat in or Take Out

FRI - SEPT 5TH • 11 - 2 / 4 - 6 \* MASONIC LODGE 215 E. WATER ST.