



## Rocky Hock paintball wars

"The only thing that doesn't come off in the wash is the welts," one paintball veteran explains while suiting up for combat. **A7**

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# CHOWAN HERALD

482-4418

Wednesday, December 31, 2008

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## Save money and the planet

Energy expert to speak on reducing electric power consumption

By **Vernon Fueston**  
Staff Writer

Edenton energy expert Cy Rich will present his views on cutting electric power consumption in the town and county to two civic and environmental groups this weekend.

His presentation will concentrate on specific ways local residents and businesses can save both money and the planet.

His program, "Sustainable Energy and the Future" will be presented at Edenton's First Presbyterian Church, Saturday at 11 a.m.

The Chowan/Edenton Environmental Group and Change for America are sponsoring the program.

Rich has practical experience in the field of energy and energy conservation.

He started his career in the natural gas business and went on to help form a partnership in France that distributed electricity and the fuel to generate it around the country.

Today, Rich helps run a firm that invests in alternative energy sources and serves on the governor's energy policy council.

He also teaches energy policy at Duke and is the chairman of North Carolina's Environmental Defense Fund.

Rich said his presentation will concentrate on energy conservation rather than exotic and expensive ways to generate electricity.

He said relatively inexpensive steps like energy efficient lighting, insulation and the sealing of ductwork and drafts can save most households about 15 percent in energy costs each year.

But Rich said there are hurdles to overcome in making those improvements. Many of Chowan's homes are older and often its residents poorer than those in larger communities.

While subsidies are available to the poorest county residents, Rich said those

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"It's noise all day long," mother Suzanne Bass said. "It's pure music."



Vernon Fueston

Shane Bass, with the help of new cochlear implants, gets to hear the noises his Christmas presents make.

## Local boy makes stunning progress with new "ears"

By **Vernon Fueston**  
Staff Writer

Nine months after stunning cutting-edge surgery restored a two year-old Edenton boy's hearing, his parents have high hopes he will start school two years from now, able to hear, speak and learn with his class.

Bryan and Suzanne Bass made a bold decision back in March to push ahead with surgery, despite the decision by their health insurance company to deny coverage for the cochlear implants that have effectively cured their son's deafness.

The company took the position that Shane's implants were "hearing aids," not covered under the policy.

That meant the family had to go \$100,000 in debt, but Suzanne Bass said there was never any choice.

Unless the surgery was

done while he was two or three years old, Shane would require special education at a deaf school in Wilson.

### Resident donate money

Neighbors from around Chowan County and the country chipped in to make it possible for Shane to hear.

"We expected to have a few donations coming in, but nothing like what we got," Bryan Bass said, overwhelmed by the community response.

"We still get contributions from people, \$10 here and there for Christmas presents and the like."

An article in the Chowan Herald brought Shane's situation to the public's attention just before his surgery. Reprinted in the Daily Advance, the article made its way onto wire services and Web sites around the country.

The Bass family received contributions from people they'd never heard from in New York and Florida.

Radio talk-show host Rush Limbaugh, himself a cochlear implant recipient, even sent a contribution, requesting a copy of the paper.

But it's the response of friends and neighbors that impressed Bryan and Suzanne.

"Everybody I can think of in Chowan County gave something," Bryan said.

"We just are in the best little community in the world. Chowan County has the biggest heart."

### A noisy two-year old

Today, Shane has a spoken vocabulary of 50 spoken words and 25 signs, something his therapists find remarkable.

They credit the fact that he is one of only two children

in North Carolina who've received implants for each ear.

The use of dual implants is said to markedly increase the clarity of the sound Shane hears.

Microphones pinned to the back of Shane's shirt collar transmit signals to receptors implanted under the skin on either side of Shane's skull.

Magnets under the skin hold the connection in place, allowing electrical signals to directly stimulate the nerves in his ear.

Shane took to the implants immediately.

Doctors had warned he might find his first sounds traumatic, but his first response was one of pure wonder. Since then his progress has been remarkable.

Suzanne said she first noticed something was wrong

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## Man gets Christmas call from President

Chowan deputy Neil Ambrose one of 10 given honor

Story by **Army Staff Sgt. Emily J. Russell**  
JTF Guantanamo Public Affairs

**GUANTANAMO BAY, Cuba** — It's not every day a trooper receives a phone call from President George

W. Bush.

For Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Neil Ambrose, however, Dec. 24 was that day.

"It was an honor," said Ambrose of speaking with Bush.

"I was shocked that I was selected out of hundreds of thousands of deployed members."

"At first he called me by

my name," he continued. "He said, 'Neil, this is President Bush, how are you today?'"

Ambrose replied that he was fine, and thanked President Bush for "all he's done for the Coast Guard and military members over the past eight years."

Ambrose chatted with the president, with Bush asking, "How's the weather down there?"

"It's warm," Ambrose replied. "How would you like to join us?"

The call lasted a moment longer before President

Bush delivered his traditional Christmas message.

According to Ambrose, President Bush said, "On behalf of Laura and myself, I want you to pass along to other deployed members that we appreciate your service and wish you a Merry Christmas, especially to the mighty Coast Guard."

"I specifically remember him saying, 'the mighty Coast Guard,'" Ambrose said, smiling.

The Christmas Eve phone call has become a tradition for President Bush. Each

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## Boat workers lose jobs

Unemployment in county reaches 16-year high

By **Rebecca Bunch**  
Staff Writer

Thirty-five Albemarle Boats employees placed on extended leave in October were told recently they will not be called back to work in 2009.

This comes on the heels of published reports that Chowan County is now experiencing its highest unemployment rate in almost 16 years.

Brenna Preisser, human resources director for Brunswick Corp., which owns Albemarle Boats in Edenton, said workers received the news Dec. 10.

She said that 30 employees currently remain on the job in the plant.

For other boat building operations in the community, things are holding steady for now.

### Staying open

Preisser said Albemarle chose to keep a core group of employees who could carry out most any function necessary and that they are now "performing multiple jobs" to keep the facility operational.

Administrative offices at the plant also remain open, Preisser said.

She said the company is hopeful the economy will improve and that no further cuts will be necessary.

Ricky Coltrain, director of the local ECS office, said those workers had been receiving jobless benefits under an attached claim filed by Albemarle when the work furlough was announced.

An attached claim indicates that a business plans to call back employees covered by that claim, he said.

Coltrain said those workers would now need to file individual claims to continue receiving checks.

### Coming back

Regulator Marine also placed over 60 of its 78 employees on an extended work

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Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Neil Ambrose received a presidential phone call Christmas Eve morning with a holiday greeting from President George Bush.