# CHOWANTERALD

482-4418

Wednesday, December 23, 2009

**Actions deplete** Aces' wrestling ranks Page 8A

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## **Schools** to seek Race to **Top funds**

By Rebecca Bunch Staff Writer

During a special meeting Thursday the Edenton - Chowan Board of Education voted unanimously to join other school systems in the state by seeking funds associated with the federal "Race to the Top" initiative.

Thurs day's impromptu meeting was necessaryso tne school district could beat the Jan. 5 deadline for application



Smith

submissions. To be considered for the federal funding, the school board is required to submit a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to the state with the signatures of Superintendent Allan Smith, Ricky Browder, board chairman, and Beth Gagnon, local chapter president of the North Carolina Association of Educators.

As of Thursday, Gagnon had not yet heard from her

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# County to reap Rural grants

By RITCHIE E. STARNES

Chowan County and the town of Edenton stand to benefit from a series of grants, courtesy of the North Carolina Rural Center.

The Rural Center announced Thursday that the agency will award \$5 million among 34 grants spread across the state, part of an effort to create jobs and improve community development in rural areas. Another initiative behind the grant is to provide access to clean water or upgrade wastewater systems.

"It's part of an ongoing effort to improve the rural counties in North Carolina," said Garnet Bass, director of communications for the center. "The purpose of the grants is to create jobs in areas that have been hit hard economically."

Grant proceeds were made possible by appropriations of the N.C. General Assembly and voter-approved bonds. The Rural Center's board of

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#### Peace on earth



BRETT A. CLARK/THE DAILY ADVANCE

Top: Boys dressed as shepherds sit around a fire as participants in the "Angels and the Shepherds" Christmas scene at Center Hill Baptist Church's panorama called "The Greatest Gift, Sunday.

BREIT A. CLARK/THE DAILY ADVANCE

Right: This scene is titled "Jesus and the Children," one of several scenes in Center Hill Baptist Church's panorama held Sunday at the church.



## Ex-con: Inmates need 2nd chance

Whitehurst hopes to open halfway homes

By DIANA MAZZELLA The Daily Advance

then an inmate is released from Pasquotank Correctional Institution, he leaves with a set of clothes, an in-state bus ticket and \$50. That's not a lot to try and start a new life with, particularly when you're at the bottom of the hire list and the world is much changed from when you were first locked up.

Darren Whitehurst knows first hand just how hard it is to start over after spending time in prison. A former college baseball player, Whitehurst spent 10 years incarcerated for drug-related offenses after getting hooked on crack cocaine.

While in prison, Whitehurst earned a degree in counseling from East Carolina University. Today, he's a car salesman at Toyota of Elizabeth City, a minister at Saunders Grove Missionary Baptist Church and owns his own lawn-care business.

Whitehurst, 42, is far from the typical former



JUSTIN FALLS/THE DAILY ADVANCE

Darren Whitehurst, associate pastor of Saunders Grove Missionary Baptist Church, seen in this photo Monday, Dec. 14, is helping to start halfway houses in Martin See WHITEHURST on Page 2A and Chowan counties for former prison inmates.

#### Schools net dropout prevention grants

Edenton-Chowan receives third grant

**By Kristin Pitts** Staff Writer

Local school districts that fall below the state's average graduation rate have been awarded grants that area superintendents hope will deter at-risk students from dropping out.

The Edenton-Chowan and Perquimans school districts both received \$175,000 grants from the North Carolina Committee on Dropout Prevention.

The Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools received \$65,000.

On average, North Carolina schools graduate 71.7 percent of their students, was 64.4 percent.

according to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Web site. Edenton-Chowan, Elizabeth City-Pasquotank and Perquimans all fell below that rate for the 2008-09 academic year.

According to DPI, Edenton-Chowan's graduation rate was 70.6 percent, Elizabeth City-Pasquotank's was 69.3 percent and Perquimans'

Although this January will mark the first year that Elizabeth City-Pasquotank will benefit from the grant, this will be Edenton-Chowan's third dropout prevention grant, and Perquimans' second.

Edenton-Chowan Superintendent Allan Smith and Perquimans Superintendent

See DROPOUT on Page 3A Edenton, Thursday.

#### **Town could** see more tourism funding

By RITCHIE E. STARNES Editor

Much of Edenton's future tourism funding likely rests with collaborative partner-

Secretary Linda A. Carlisle, N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, delivered the message Thursday during her first visit to Edenton, part of her commitment to tour the state's 27 historic districts.

Part of her marketing objective is to grow tourism opportunities so visitors "stay longer, spend more.

"I'm very excited about putting some of those stimulus dollars to work here in Edenton," Carlisle said.

Town and county officials on hand at the Historic Edenton Visitor Center to greet Carlisle welcomed her news. "We have limited resources

for marketing and a tremen-

dous amount of assets," said Mayor Roland Vaughan. Carlisle told the group that she has been laying the groundwork for partnerships

that will prove beneficial to the area. "I'm not at all happy if all we can do is open the doors in the morning and then lock up

at night," Carlisle said.

Edenton's Roanoke River Lighthouse is one project that received funding from the work of a partnership. By partnering with the state Department of Transportation, organizers were able to relocate the lighthouse to Colonial Park where the 18th century structure will undergo restoration. So far, \$600,000 has been secured for the first phase of the restoration effort. Plans include a second phase as well with another \$600,000 that has yet to be

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CHOWAN HERALD PHOTO BY RITCHIE E. STARNES

Linda A. Carlisle, secretary of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources (left), joins Madison Phillips, historian and volunteer, on the porch of the Roanoke River Lighthouse. Phillips took Carlisle on a tour of the 18th century structure during her first visit to

"Come Join Us As We Celebrate Our Lord's Birth"

ST. PAUL'S, 101 W. CHURCH ST. Father Thomas M. Rickenbaker, Rector ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH invites you to their

5:30 PM CHILDREN'S SERVICE 10:30 PM SPECIAL CHRISTMAS MUSIC CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES 11:00 PM CANDLELIGHT COMMUNION