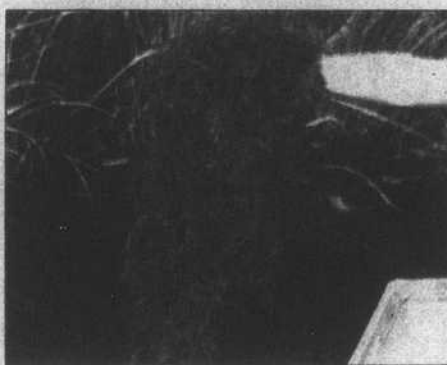


# CHOWAN HERALD

482-4418

Wednesday, March 2, 2011

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## Broadband, energy to drive economy

PHOTO BY PEGGY ROGERSON

Craig Poff, senior business developer for Iberdrola Renewables, discusses wind energy during Friday's North Carolina Northeast Commission's annual State of the Region held in Williamston.



### Agriculture, tourism both seen as key

By RITCHIE E. STARNES  
Editor

Northeast North Carolina's economy could reap significant dividends from the future development of rural broadband Internet and wind energy, according to Friday's State of the Region message in Williamston.

Between future technology and expanding the region's existing economic mainstays, the 16-county northeast corridor could be poised to gain significant fiscal benefits,

including more jobs. Business and community leaders pounded home the theme at the North Carolina Northeast Commission's annual conference held at the Bob Martin Agriculture Center. Bringing broadband and wind energy to this part of the state would create economic opportunities.

The newly formed non-profit Northeast Broadband plans to negotiate with the non-profit MCNC and buy trunk lines that would bring broadband to those not served or underserved in the state's northeast, according to Paul Tine, part of the regional group spearheading

the effort. He emphasized that broadband is a vital part of business infrastructure whereby its absence translates into less competitiveness.

"It's going to affect every single industry," Tine said. "It will be one of the basic things that you can't do without."

He said 16 percent of this region's population has no broadband service with a majority currently underserved.

Tine points to the technological trend that suggests an increasingly dependence on broadband for education, industry, and healthcare.

In 2008, 4.6 million students, or 25 percent of the student population, engaged in online courses. Tine added that more textbooks are also making the transition from hardbacks to online publications.

Healthcare is already using broadband for remote 3D surgery, monitoring, and diagnostics, Tine added.

As many as 30 million people are working remotely from their homes at least one day a week because of broadband capability, he said.

Plans include for Northeast Broadband to help bridge the

See ECONOMY, 4A

## POLAR PLUNGE 2011



STAFF PHOTOS BY THOMAS J. TURNER

Polar Plungers jump off the dock into the frigid water at this year's Polar Plunge at Colonial Park on the downtown Edenton waterfront, Saturday.

### Plungers brave 51-degree bay for Special Olympics

By REBECCA BUNCH  
Staff Writer

Between 300 and 400 area residents attended Saturday's annual Polar Plunge and watched 34 brave souls leap into the frigid waters of the Edenton Bay.

Part of a yearly fundraiser for Chowan County's Special Olympics, the fourth annual event raised about \$6,000 with organizers still collecting donations, according to Linda Hobbs, event co-chairwoman and director of the Edenton-Chowan Schools' Exceptional Children's Program.

Among those splashing into the 51-degree water at Colonial Park was Virginia Wood of Edenton.

"I am 80 years old," Wood declared energetically, "and if (former President) George Bush can jump out of an airplane, I can jump into the (Albemarle) Sound!"

Wood was referring to the former president's 2009 jump in Kennebunkport, Maine in celebration of his 85th birthday.



Cayden Jensen, 2, gets his face painted at this year's Polar Plunge, Saturday.

Others, like Laura Harkins and Kim Donn of Woodville, who called their two-person team the Super PP's (Polar Plungers), came to jump in support of a family member and friend.

"This is the second year we have done this," said Harkins. "Laura's nephew, Luke Byrum

(of Chowan County), has cerebral palsy," said Donn. "We are jumping in honor of Luke and all the other Special Olympians."

Among the youngest jumpers were best friends Sara A. Gravely, 13, and Hannah Glasgow, 12.

See PLUNGE, 2A

## Father finds son, 13, dead in bed

By REBECCA BUNCH  
Staff Writer

A 13-year-old boy was found dead in bed.

"His dad went to wake him up and his body was still warm, but his dad could not wake him up," said Larry Knox, Chris's maternal grandfather.

Christopher Lee O'Neal, a 7th grader at Chowan Middle School, was found dead Feb. 20 by his father, Roy O'Neal. The teenager's cause of death remains unknown at this time. His family awaits the results of an autopsy.

Knox said that rumors Tula Polvodore, a counselor at CMS, said that attack were not true.

"We've (family) heard all

kinds of things," he said. "I don't know where people get these stories."

Knox said that Chris was the youngest of his daughter Amy's three children. "He (Chris) had two older brothers," Knox said. "He was the baby."

When asked how he would remember Chris, Knox replied, "He was just an average mischievous boy, always playing pranks."

"He was a good boy, though," Knox added. "He didn't mind helping his granddaddy. He liked to cut grass with my mower."

Tula Polvodore, a counselor at CMS, said that

See O'NEAL, 2A

## Chowan to stop passport services

By REBECCA BUNCH  
Staff Writer

Starting May 1st Chowan County residents who need a passport will have to drive out of town to get one.

Superior Clerk of Court Mike McArthur said that because of a reduction in his staff, and changes in passport regulations, his office is no longer able to provide the service.

McArthur said he regretted the action was necessary but felt he had no choice.

"Helping passport applicants complete another step in their travel plans is something that we have done for the 16 years that I have been here," McArthur said. "However, hav-

ing lost three of my eight staff members to Governor (Bev) Perdue's budget cuts, I am left with no alternative but to focus our resources on the core statutory functions of the Clerk's Office — processing and managing judicial responsibilities."

McArthur said that changes in passport laws, as well as increased demands from the National Passport Service Center in terms of fees and training requirements, have made the processing of passports more difficult and time-consuming.

"There is a lot of liability associated with assisting an unknown person as they gain access to the

See PASSPORT, 4A

## State budget cuts debating between buses or teachers

By KRISTIN PITTS  
Staff Writer

Local superintendents are concerned that Gov. Bev Perdue's \$19.9 billion



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budget, if implemented, would put more funding responsibility on the local government level.

The cuts are designed to help close an estimated \$2.4 billion deficit in next year's state budget.

Earlier this week, area school leaders expressed displeasure with several areas of the governor's budget. The overriding concern appeared to be

that the cuts would continue to deepen as the budget takes shape.

During a presentation to the Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Board of Education, Monday, Superintendent Linwood Williams acknowledged that parts of Perdue's budget look good, but that other parts are causing him to be nervous about a hard year ahead.

Williams was critical of the governor's decision to move several financial responsibilities — such as workers' compensation, and purchasing of school buses, among other things — from the state level to the local level.

"She's avoiding some of those hard calls, but she said she's not cutting education," Williams said. "But she's getting local

boards of education to make those calls."

Williams wasn't the only superintendent to worry about the new local responsibilities.

Camden County Superintendent Melvin Hawkins said the shifts amount to "very big burdens placed on local government."

Hawkins said he hopes the public will understand that although the gov-

ernor's budget protects state-funded teachers and teacher assistants, many teachers and teacher assistants are funded locally.

"I think we'd be fooling ourselves to think that we're going to be operating just the same as we were this year, or last year, for the upcoming year. I think anybody who thinks that

See BUDGET, 5A

**EDENTON LIONS CLUB - "WE SERVE"**  
**BREAKFAST FOR THE BLIND**  
 Edenton Baptist Church - March 19th | 7AM - 11 AM  
 \$6.00 - all proceeds benefit the Lions Program for the Blind.

*Eat in or carry out!*