



## Principals Gillespie, Evans reassigned

From staff reports

A series of principal changes among Edenton-Chowan Schools will begin next week, including at John A. Holmes High and D.F. Walker Elementary schools.

Two principals will be transferred to other posts and another called from retirement effective Jan. 17. Holmes High School principal Jamie Gillespie will

assume the duties of director of secondary education previously held by Stacy Leggett, who resigned for a similar post with the Martin County Schools. Sheila Evans, current principal at D.F. Walker Elementary School will take over as principal at Holmes. Mary P. Nixon, former principal of White Oak Elementary School will serve as principal at D.F. Walker School for the remainder of the

school year to allow time for a permanent replacement to be hired.

“With Miss Leggett’s resignation, it was important to reassess the needs of the school system and to align our current personnel in positions that

will continue to move our schools forward,” said Superintendent Allan Smith in a press release.

Smith recommended the carousel of changes and the Board of Education approved the moves at Monday night’s

regularly scheduled school board meeting.

Only Gillespie will move from a school to central administration.

“Mrs. Gillespie’s skills and leadership will be valuable in her new role as the director of secondary education and CTE,” Smith said. “Her skills will be utilized to continue to provide guidance and resources for our schools at the middle and

high school level as we navigate the common core and essential standards and efforts to strengthen and enhance our career and technical education programs.”

Gillespie will begin transitioning into her new role with the help of Leggett, who leaves Feb. 3. Gillespie said she is eager for the new challenge.



Gillespie



Evans

See PRINCIPALS, 2A

## GOP wants to wrest away Dem control

By RITCHIE E. STARNES  
Editor

Already a key battleground state for November’s General Election, Democrat and Republican leaders alike are set to storm the state for support, including the Albemarle region.

With Republicans set to build on the party’s recent control of the state legislature, GOP leaders have increased their visibility in northeastern North Carolina where newly drawn districts could favor their candidates.

Thirteen of the 15 counties that comprise northeastern North Carolina voters in District 8 either have a state or congressional boundary change.

During a stop in Edenton last week, Wayne King, vice chairman of the N.C. Republican Party, said he’s

See GOP, 3A

## EASELS IN THE GARDEN



SUBMITTED PHOTOS BY KIP SHAW

The beautifully maintained gardens at Beverly Hall will be among those featured on the upcoming Easels in the Gardens tour this spring. Tickets for the event go on sale later this month.

## New event fills Pilgrimage’s off year

By REBECCA BUNCH  
Staff Writer

In recent years members of the Cupola House Association have worked to raise public awareness concerning the historic site.

The association, under the leadership of outgoing president Patti Kersey, has made sure the doors to the house are open to the public at every opportunity, as are the gardens that are tended by volunteers year round.

Now, the association is planning a first-time event, “Easels in the Gardens,” April 13-14 from 1-5 p.m. both days. Tickets go on sale Jan. 15.

Chairwoman Sally Francis Kehayes said that if the event proves successful, the association would continue to hold it during the years when the Biennial Pilgrimage is not taking place.

“It just seems natural to us that giving people the opportunity to come and tour some of



Visitors to the Easels in the Gardens tour this spring will have the opportunity to enjoy the rose garden at the home of Roland and Peggy Anne Vaughan.

Edenton’s loveliest private, and public, gardens is a wonderful way to keep people in the habit of coming to Edenton every spring,” said Kehayes, who is also the new president of the Cupola House Association.

“And giving them the opportunity to enjoy the art being created in the gardens will be an

added benefit.”

Landscape design ideas and plant selection information will be provided at each garden, courtesy of the local Master Gardeners group, Kehayes said.

Edenton artist Debbie Boyle, who along with Peggy Anne

See EASELS, 2A

## EEOC rules for racial complaint

Schools requests reversal of ruling

By RITCHIE E. STARNES  
Editor

More than two years after first filing complaints with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the agency ruled that Edenton-Chowan Schools racially discriminated against a former administrator when she was demoted.

In addition to charges of racial discrimination, the EEOC ruled Dec. 30 that the school system also retaliated by firing Mary Lyons Felton after she complained of discrimination. Both charges are deemed violations of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. After first filing EEOC claims against the school system on Aug. 3, 2009, pending a reassignment and later suspended, and then terminated, Felton called the findings vindication.

“I felt my reputation had been tarnished,” Felton said Tuesday. “To restore my reputation as a competent, cooperative, and committed educator is important to me.”

School officials counter that the EEOC findings are inaccurate and without value.

“Ms. Felton’s reliance on a recent administrative determination from the EEOC means nothing. The administrative determination does not have the weight of law; it is not a court decision,” said Michelle Maddox, schools spokeswoman, in an emailed response to the Chowan Herald.

Maddox stated that the school system has requested that the EEOC reverse its ruling, adding that the determination is baseless.

Felton claimed that the school system used race

See EEOC, 3A

## USDA to close local offices

From staff reports

Part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s efforts to save \$150 million annually, the federal agency announced Monday that Chowan County will lose a rural development office and a Farm Service Agency.

U.S. Agricultural Tom Vilsack announced that the agency plans to close 259 domestic offices, labs, and other facilities in a cost saving move. The closures are made possible as a result of smaller staffed offices and consolidated services due to other USDA offices within a 20-mile proximity. In other cases, technology improvements, advanced service centers, and broadband service have reduced some need for brick and mortar facilities.

“The USDA, like fami-

See USDA, 3A



## Chowan posts 10.5 percent unemployment

From staff reports

Unemployment rates decreased in the majority of North Carolina’s counties, including Chowan, according to the N.C. Employment Security Commission office in Raleigh.

The state ESC office stated in a Jan. 4 press release that during November rates decreased in 74 counties, increased in 20 and remained the same in six.

Chowan County posted a 10.5 percent jobless rate for November, the most recent month for which statistics are available. The previous month the county had a 10.9 percent unemployment rate.

With a labor force of 6,028 there are currently 632 unemployed workers in Chowan County, according to the state ESC.

“Unemployment rates continued to drop across North Carolina in November,” stat-

ed North Carolina Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary Dale Carroll in the release. “Over-the-year, rates have decreased in 71 counties. We remain focused on assisting our customers at our DES offices and JobLink Career Centers statewide.”

The state posted an unadjusted unemployment rate of 9.5 percent for November. Thirty-nine counties in the state posted rates even with or below that figure.

### By the Numbers

Jobless rate percentages posted in surrounding counties for November were:

- Bertie — 11.4
- Camden — 7.3
- Currituck — 7.2
- Dare — 11.6
- Gates — 6.9
- Hertford — 10.2
- Pasquotank — 10.1
- Perquimans — 9.2
- Tyrrell — 9.5
- Washington — 12.1