



'Homeboys' helping out their hometown — 6B

## Pulp mill expansion offers promise for region

By REGGIE PONDER  
Staff Writer

Expansion at the Domtar pulp mill across the Albemarle Sound from Chowan County offers economic promise for Chowan and all of northeastern North Carolina, according to economic development officials.

Lignin just might be the most valuable commodity you've never heard of — and northeastern North Carolina is on the ground floor in producing it for an embryonic market.

The Domtar pulp mill in Washington County held a ribbon-cutting Thursday for a new lignin separation plant, which will separate and refine lignin for sale to

external customers.

The plant already employs more than 400 workers.

"Obviously as they expand their product lines it helps ensure employment in the region and also provides an opportunity where maybe we can get some companion companies that would have an interest in the products," Vann Rogerson, president and chief executive officer of the Northeast Commission, said this week. "So it's positive for us."

Normally, lignin is found in the pulp mill by-product sometimes known as black liquor. Because it is highly combustible, pulp mills for some time have used the substance to help fire their

own furnaces.

But now Domtar — boosted by a \$7 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture — is separating and refining lignin into a powder form and will package it for market.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said in a phone interview last week that the department made the investment in the lignin separation project because of lignin's potential value as an alternative fuel, solvent, ink and adhesive.

USDA is working to expand the variety of end uses in the forest products industry and to increase the value of those uses, which in turn will create incentives for forest landowners to be more resourceful in

managing their timberlands, Vilsack said.

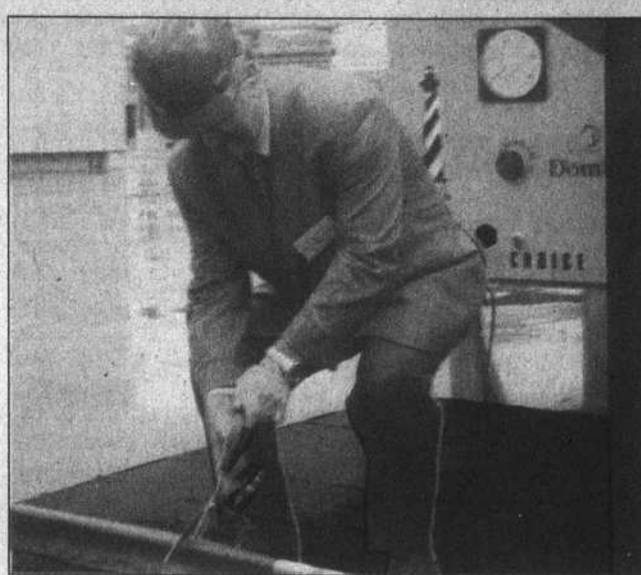
"That's an exciting aspect of it," Vilsack said of the opportunities the forest products industry presents for landowners.

The USDA forest products lab in Wisconsin has been developing a Kevlar-like vest using wood fiber, Vilsack said.

"There are really unlimited uses," Vilsack said.

Northeastern North Carolina has a long history as a source of timber for both lumber and pulp.

Vilsack said not only can large timber companies benefit from the expanding market created by lignin and other high-value wood



STAFF PHOTO BY REGGIE PONDER

John Williams, president and chief executive officer of Domtar, cuts the ribbon Thursday at the company's new lignin separation plant in Washington County.

See PLANT, 2A

## Man pleads in sex offense

From staff reports

A former Chowan County resident is in prison after pleading guilty to first-degree sex offense with a child, according to court and prison records.

David W. Bryant, 50, entered a guilty plea to the charge in Currituck Superior Court on May 22.

Bryant was sentenced to 300-369 months in prison and given credit for 932 days served, according to court records.

The projected release date for Bryant is Oct. 25, 2040, according to information on the N.C. Department of Correction website.

The incident that led to the conviction occurred in November 2005, according to Department of Correction records.

## Town council mulls sign rules

By REBECCA BUNCH  
Staff Writer

An increased use of signs that are in violation of the town's Unified Development Ordinance has led to a discussion among town officials about enforcement issues.

Town Planner Sam Barrow requested during the town council's May 28 committee night meeting that the council consider implementing a 30-day education program aimed at making local residents and business owners aware of what are and are not appropriate signs under the UDO.

At press time the council was scheduled to vote on

See SIGNS, 4A



## GRADUATION 2013



STAFF PHOTO BY REGGIE PONDER

John A. Holmes High School 2013 graduate Kayla Ann Warren gets a congratulatory hug from Principal Sheila Evans after receiving her diploma during the school's graduation ceremony, Saturday.

## Holmes graduates class of 'lollipop children'

By REGGIE PONDER  
Editor

John A. Holmes High School on Saturday graduated a class of 150 that valedictorian Ashton Copeland said had earned the moniker "lollipop children" because of its optimistic outlook.

That optimism apparently was not dampened

even by the rain and wind that postponed the ceremony from Friday night to Saturday morning.

Copeland encouraged the class of 2013 to hold fast to the upbeat mindset that has become its hallmark. She said that she has been told she sees the world through rose-colored glasses.

"But our optimism has

gotten our class to be labeled as the 'lollipop children' since early in our high school career, so I think that might be a good thing," Copeland told her classmates.

One of Saturday's graduates, Joseph Fain, who holds the rank of sergeant first class in Army Junior ROTC, plans to serve in the Army now that he

has graduated from high school.

But Saturday morning he was taking one last opportunity to enjoy John A. Holmes High School.

"I'm just so happy to have this moment," Fain said. "So happy. There's no feeling greater than graduating from your first stepping-stone."

Fain intends to go to

Officer Candidate School in the Army.

"I plan to do a full 30 years in the U.S. Army," Fain said.

He explained that his father is retired military and he also learned a lot from military recruiters who visited the school.

Fain said his mother

See GRADUATION, 2A

## Farm service agency seeks local leaders

By PETER WILLIAMS  
The Perquimans Weekly

Starting this month more than 2,200 farmers in Chowan and Perquimans counties will be asked to nominate new leaders for the farm service agency that helps set local policies.

The two county farm service agencies were merged in October as part of an effort to cut federal spending. Four other North Carolina offices that were within 25 miles of another agency and had two or more employees faced the same fate last year.

The office in Chowan County was closed and consolidated with a FSA office at 512 S. Church St., in Hertford.

Now Denise Gregory is the county executive director for those two counties plus Camden, Currituck and Pas-

quotank. The first consolidation happened in 1995.

"The Perquimans and Chowan County farm communities, of course, are vital to North Carolina's agriculture," Gregory said. "This new arrangement enables the Perquimans-Chowan County Farm Service Agency to serve producers more effectively."

Consolidating Chowan and Perquimans into one district required changing the boundary lines of the districts. FSA's are required to have an odd number, so the new district has five. Two are purely Perquimans districts, two are Chowan districts and one has parts of both.

Representatives of four of the five district are up for election this year.

See FARM, 4A



LAA 1 - Represented by Harry Lee Windsor 6, J.C. Moore, CHOWAN COUNTY  
LAA 2 - Represented by Corey Parrish, CHOWAN COUNTY  
LAA 3 - Represented by Seattle Winthrop, PERQUIMANS COUNTY  
LAA 4 - Represented by Donald Skiba, CHOWAN & PERQUIMANS COUNTIES  
LAA 5 - Represented by Michael Moore, PERQUIMANS COUNTY

MAP COURTESY FARM SERVICE AGENCY