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School officials mull 'unintended consequences' of ACA

BY REBECCA BUNCH
 Staff Writer

Substitute teachers working long-term in the local school system could have their insurance coverage impacted by provisions of the Affordable Care Act — a development the local

school board chairman says could have "grave ramifications for our school system here."

Michelle Maddox, human resources director for the Edenton-Chowan Schools, told the school board at its Nov. 3 meeting that under the terms of the ACA, school

systems that have 50 or more employees will have to make insurance available to all full-time employees. Full-time, as defined by the ACA, is considered to be 30 or more hours a week.

The concern is that substitute teachers who, for example, are filling in for a

permanent teacher who is out on extended maternity leave, could easily meet that benchmark. In that case, the school system would be required to make insurance available under the terms of the ACA. In many cases, those substitute teachers are retired teachers who are

already covered under a different — and some say, better — health care plan. They could be forced to convert to the ACA plan under its guidelines.

"This definitely has implications for school systems," Maddox said.

The situation could result

in some substitute teachers no longer agreeing to take on long-term sub assignments, she said.

Maddox said that under the plan the school system is required to make insurance coverage available to

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COMMUNITY REMEMBERS, HONORS FALLEN HEROES OF VIETNAM

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

Retired Army Chaplain Corbin Lee Cherry told those who attended a Vietnam Veterans memorial ceremony in Edenton Saturday that their attendance was a way of being there both for those who died in Vietnam and those who returned home.

The notion of 'being there' was imbued with particular poignance by Cherry's recollection of a young soldier who died in his arms in the wake of a firefight in Vietnam. The dying soldier, grateful that he didn't have to die alone, looked into Cherry's eyes and said "I knew that you would be here" just before he died on the battlefield.

"He was an American," Cherry said of that young soldier. "He did not want to die. But even unto his death, he loved this country."

The news of negative attitudes among some at home reached those serving in Vietnam, Cherry said. He said that he was in his 30s and tended to become angry when he heard about some of the things going on at home.

Cherry recalled coming across an encampment where the Viet Cong had just evacuated, and seeing cardboard boxes that had been shipped from California to Hanoi with foodstuffs for the North Vietnamese forces.

"And the box said, 'From your friends across the sea,' he said.

"The effect it had on me



Army Master Sgt. Randolph Hill, surrounded by family and friends, speaks about his late father during a wreath-laying ceremony Saturday at Warren Grove Cemetery. Hill's father, Army Specialist Louis Elton Armstead, died Nov. 1, 1967 at Long An, Vietnam.

STAFF PHOTO BY REGGIE PONDER

was anger," Cherry said.

But for the 18-year-olds he served alongside, the dominant effect was depression, he said.

And when a soldier left Vietnam, Cherry said, "he came home to face this mess." The soldier relived nights and days when he was shot at in Vietnam, recalled when people beside him were killed — "and all of that stuff was going on

here," Cherry said.

"All wars can tell the same story — different places, different times, but the same story," Cherry said.

But while the plight of the Vietnam veteran started in Vietnam, it often continued when he returned home to America, Cherry said.

The things going on in America were very depressing to an 18-year-old boy, he said.

It was a lot to deal with for someone barely out of high school, Cherry said.

"Even I had trouble dealing with the environment when I came back," Cherry said, explaining he sometimes would scan the hills looking for an ambush when he would drive through hilly country in northern Virginia.

"The Vietnam vet came back to America, and all he

wanted to do was be normal — but that was not to be," Cherry said.

Cherry told of a young soldier he met during his service as a military hospital chaplain in California. The young man came back to America after losing both his arms and one of his legs.

The young soldier was understandably depressed and lackluster at first, Cher-

ry said, but began to take an interest in his physical therapy after adopting the goal of walking across the bridge that he could see from his hospital room.

The soldier asked Cherry, who also had lost a leg in Vietnam, to make the walk with him. Cherry agreed, and called all the television stations and newspapers

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Report: Paramedic upgrade easing EMS revenue loss

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

A representative of the company that provides billing services for Chowan Emergency Medical Services told the county commissioners this month that an unexpected dropoff in dialysis transports had sliced deeply into EMS revenues.

Dave Pickering of Colleton Software, the billing company that works with Chowan County EMS, said the drop in dialysis patients had affected overall call volume, which is down 22 percent over the last four years.

"Clearly the call volume and the resulting decrease in billing revenues comes directly from the near elimination of dialysis transports," according to a written report distributed to the county commissioners at their Nov. 3 meeting.

The report indicates there were 927 dialysis calls for Chowan EMS in 2011, down all the way to 549 in 2013. And so far in 2014 there have been only 137,

according to the report.

Dialysis patients have either moved away or died, according to the report.

But while the county's EMS is seeing fewer calls, it is being paid more on a per-call basis, Pickering said.

The past two months have been two of the strongest months of 2014, Pickering said.

The county this year upgraded its EMS to paramedic level for Advanced Life Support calls. County staff told the commissioners the additional revenue from the ALS calls would offset the cost of the upgrade.

Pickering said the revenue does offset the cost of the upgrade to advanced life support. The additional revenue from advanced life support should exceed \$300,000 as predicted, Pickering said.

Even though EMS is being subsidized from the county's general fund at some \$50,000 a month, that hole would be even deeper if the ALS revenues were not coming in, according to Pickering.

Pickering added that virtually all county EMS agencies, especially ones in this part of the state, are subsidized out of the county's general fund.

Pickering said there had been a 22 percent drop in the number of emergent calls. If the county didn't have



Mayor Roland Vaughan (left) welcomes the newly formed Explorers team being mentored by Sgt. Eric Colson and Police Chief Jay Fortenberry, during the Nov. 10 Town Council meeting.

STAFF PHOTO BY REBECCA BUNCH

Council learns about Explorers

BY REBECCA BUNCH
 Staff Writer

Members of the town council had an opportunity at their Nov. 10 monthly meeting to get acquainted with members of the recently formed Explorer Post 482.

The group, led by Sgt. Eric Colson, is made up of young people between ages 14-21 who have an interest in learning more about possible careers in law enforcement.

Colson joined Police Chief Jay Fortenberry in introducing the five current members of the

group — Krysten White, Nicholas Gummere, Edward Ashley, Jaleel Coston and Niesha Holley — to the council and posing for a group photo with Mayor Roland Vaughan and council members during the meeting, which was held one night earlier than normal because of Veterans Day.

"We have had an Explorers group in Rocky Mount, where I'm from, for a long time," Fortenberry said, "so I know this is a program that has a proven track record."

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Jay Fortenberry
 Edenton police chief

See EXPLORERS, 4A



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See UPGRADE, 4A

ROCKY HOCK OPRY FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5TH, 7:00 PM E.A. SWAIN AUDITORIUM
 Tickets \$10.00 SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6TH, 7:00 PM EDENTON, NC
 Sponsored by the Rocky Hock Ruritan's Relay for Life Team
 Tickets Available at various locations or call 252-221-4875 or 252-340-3438. Email rockyhock opry@live.com