

Early voting way ahead of 2011 numbers

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

There were 143 early votes cast in this year's Edenton Municipal Election — more than three times as many as in 2011 when the same offices were on the ballot.

Early voting ended Satur-

day. Voters went to the polls at the town's two precincts on Tuesday.

Election results were not available at presstime. Results were slated to be published in Wednesday's Daily Advance and online at www.dailyadvance.com.

The polls closed at 7:30

p.m. Tuesday.

This year's election features one contested race, with George Grother challenging incumbent Councilman Sambo Dixon for the 2nd Ward seat on the town council.

Mayor pro tem Jimmy Stallings is unopposed for

the 1st Ward seat, Councilman Steve Biggs is unopposed for an at-large seat and Mayor Roland Vaughan is unopposed in his reelection bid.

Dixon, Biggs, Stallings and Vaughan all ran unopposed in 2011, which might partly account for only 41

early votes being cast and only 157 total votes tallied in the entire election.

Chowan County Elections Director Rebecca Lowe said that the trend also had been toward more people voting early rather than casting their ballots on Election Day.

At the time of the 2011 Municipal Election there were 3,298 registered voters in the Town of Edenton.

Voter turnout in the 2011 election was 4.76 percent.

At the time of this year's election the town had 3,142 registered voters, according to county elections staff.

EIC celebrates 50 years of service, legacies of employees

■ Longtime Head Start instructors honored

BY CORINNE SAUNDERS
The Daily Advance

Three buildings received new names during a gala celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Edenton-based Economic Improvement Council, Inc., which took place Saturday afternoon at Elizabeth City State University's K.E. White Center.

The Head Start buildings in Hyde and Perquimans counties will now be named for longtime Head Start teachers Ethel Whitaker and Joyce Felton, respectively; and the EIC building in Manteo is to be named in honor of longtime EIC social worker Delvera "Dell" Collins.

The EIC operates four programs geared toward fighting poverty in 10 counties in northeastern North Carolina: Section 8 housing, Head Start, a weatherization program and Community Services Block Grants.

Head Start is a federally funded preschool program geared toward readying low-income children for school.

Whitaker has worked with Hyde County Head Start for 50 years and will retire in May.

She "has been and is an amazing blessing to our Head Start program," said Landon Mason, EIC executive director.

He praised her diligent work, even as the program has seen major changes. When Whitaker began teaching, no requirements existed for teachers, Mason noted, but Whitaker pursued and earned her associate's degree at "well over 60" years old.

Whitaker "is well respected in the Hyde County community, and we appreciate her service," Mason added.

Since fall 2011, each Head Start classroom is required to have at least one teacher holding a minimum of an associate's degree, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website.



STAFF PHOTO BY THOMAS J. TURNEY

Ethel Whitaker (left), supervisor of the Head Start Center, waves to the audience while being recognized by EIC Executive Director Landon Mason Rr. at the Economic Improvement Council Inc.'s 50th anniversary Black and White Gala at the K.E. White Center, Saturday.

A woman who identified herself as a fellow Hyde Head Start employee for about 25 years noted that she has seen Whitaker demonstrate more energy than far younger teachers and that she "has set the pace for children ... mannerly children."

Whitaker "still has that old-school discipline," she said. "She knows how to be able to talk to children without raising her voice and get their respect."

Upon finding out that Whitaker is still teaching at 80 years old, gala attendees gave Whitaker a standing ovation.

"This program not only gave me the resources to shape young minds, (but was) a fulfilling and trea-

sured journey," Whitaker said in her brief remarks.

Whitaker said she plans to continue mentoring children as a volunteer with Head Start after she retires.

Felton, who worked for 45 years at the Perquimans Head Start Center, is already retired but still volunteering with the organization. She encouraged gala attendees to also volunteer with Head Start.

Felton is "constantly giving of herself and of her time to make life better for other people," Mason stated, and has even given her own money to provide college scholarship funding for area Head Start teachers.

"When you give to someone, God will give it back to you," Felton said, to applause.

"Head Start (or) any human service program is about giving," she said.

Felton taught with Head Start for 21 years, then was

asked to join administration, where she was told she could "work with 300-some children instead of 20," and also work with children with disabilities.

"I love that; I have a disability myself," she noted.

Mason thanked the EIC board of directors, which "willingly agreed" to rename both the Hyde and Perquimans Head Start centers. Staff will have to answer the phones with the full name of the center, including the name of each respective honoree. The EIC wanted to honor the two longtime employees while they're living, he said.

"I thank God I can see this and hear this while I'm living," Felton said.

The third named building is in honor of a deceased individual, Collins.

Beulah Charity Ashby of the Dare County Water Department, read a proclamation honoring Collins'

legacy, which included 36 years of service as an EIC social worker and 26 years of service to her hometown of Manteo as a town commissioner and mayor pro tem.

Ashby also noted that while a "quiet spirit," Collins got things done.

Also honored at the gala was Roger E. McCobb, board of directors chairman.

McCobb is nearing the end of his second five-year term, which is the maximum allowed under board bylaws, and he served eight of his 10 years as board chairman, Mason said.

Vice Chairman Albert Butts III said that McCobb treats him like a little brother, and Butts in turn has a big brother-like respect for him.

Butts praised his responsible leadership: "I didn't really have opportunity to do anything as vice chair because he was always there (at meetings)," he said.

McCobb's example "directed all board members 'to show up, roll up our sleeves and get to work,'" Butts said. U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield,

D-N.C., gave greetings at the gala via a recorded video, as he was unable to attend in person.

Butterfield praised the EIC's efforts to EIC "to improve the lives of eastern North Carolinians," and pledged his support in fighting poverty.

Mason said that more than 200 people attended the gala, hailing from all 10 counties in the EIC's service area.

"The response has been great," Mason said, noting local politicians, the faith community, local businesspersons, retired schoolteachers and EIC staff were present, among others.

The EIC traces its roots to former U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson's Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

Countless "community action agencies launched in 1965," including the EIC, Mason said, and many other agencies across the country are thus also celebrating 50 years of service this year.

"Community action embodies the spirit of hope," Mason said.

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