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The weekend weather: Friday, high 75, low 57, hum. 72 percent, and .30 inches of rain; Saturday, high 73, low 44, hum. 70 percent; Sunday, high 75, low 44, hum. 48 percent.

They are friends and neighbors. They make up 15 percent of North Carolina's population. Most are working adults. Most are married. About 25 percent of them are children.

They are the people of North Carolina who have no health insurance - roughly 900,000 of them.

Too often, these are people working for Thermal Belt employers who do not provide insurance as a benefit.

Yesterday, in our series of challenges facing the Thermal Belt medical community, one doctor estimated a third of his patients are "self-pay."

Self-pay may be alright for routine check-ups and flu medicine. But consider the potential crisis these people face everyday should a serious illness or injury occur.

The same doctor told us most self-pay patients avoid the doctor's office altogether, waiting until they are too sick to go

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State Board Rules ACT 'Not Political'

The Association of County Taxpayers (ACT) is not a political action committee.

The State Board of Elections campaign reporting office completed its investigation of ACT, and notified ACT chairman Walt Hamill of its findings in a Sept. 13 letter.

The investigation was prompted when an anonymous person, who took the pen name "I.R. Thompson", wrote the State Board of Elections questioning ACT's status.

Political action committees are required to register and file financial reports with the board of elections.

In her letter to Hamill, state board Deputy Director Yvonne Southerland said that based on ACT's denials of any political activity and a lack of any evidence presented to the contrary, ACT will not be considered a political action committee.

General voter education, voter registration drives, and sponsorship of forums and debates are not "political action" activities according to the law, Southerland wrote.

Tryon Police Chief Nathan Shields and the Rt. Rev. Robert H. Johnson will be honored at the Thirteenth Annual Community Awards Dinner Dance at Holy Cross Episcopal Church Saturday from 7 to 10 p.m. Tickets are on sale now.



Stephen Fitch

Stars In 'Fiddler'

Usually one can say of the leading actor in any stage attraction not named an inanimate object, that he is playing the title role, as in such attractions as *Hamlet*, *Man of La Mancha*, *The Most Happy Fella*, or *Titus Andronicus*. But not so in the case of Stephen Fitch, who is starring in the production of *Fiddler On The Roof* that is coming to the Fine Arts Center Sept. 26, but who is not cast in the title role.

He is not the Fiddler, which is a minor role despite being spotlighted in the title. Instead, Stephen portrays Tevye, the impoverished dairyman in the village of Anatevka. The New York Times dramatic critic who reviewed the opening of *Fiddler on the Roof* on Broadway wrote, "Tevye is one of the most glowing creations in the history of musical theater."

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A DOCTOR
IN THE
HOUSE



New Medicare Law Gives St. Luke's 30% More Return

Seventy six percent of St. Luke's Hospital patients use Medicare insurance. Historically, that's been hard on the hospital's pocketbook.

But a 1989 law has given the hospital a break, at least through fiscal year 1993.

St. Luke's is the only hospital in the two Carolinas to qualify for "Medicare dependent" status under this law, said St. Luke's Hospital Board of Trustees chairman Joe Claud.

To qualify for Medicare dependent status, a hospital must have 65% of its patients on Medicare. St. Luke's has an average of 76% Medicare patients.

Thanks to the new law, this year the hospital began receiving about 30% higher reimbursements for Medicare patient services.

"Now we can just about break even," said board of trustees member John Elliott. "If not for the Medicare dependency, the hospital would be losing its shirt."

Prior to the new status, St. Luke's faced a double whammy. Not only were its finances clouded by a high per-

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