



CHRISTMAS IS FOR ALL AGES, a fact demonstrated again this week by children from Southport Child Care Center, who went as a group to Ocean Trail Rest Home for some caroling and the spreading of good cheer.

Rescue Duties Change Hands

By BILL ALLEN
Staff Writer

"Southport will not be left without ambulance service."

With those words, Thomas E. (Tommy) Gilbert, IV, announced that Gilbert's Funeral Service has resumed providing ambulance service in the Southport area — at least temporarily.

"We will provide the people with the same ambulance service we have provided in the past," Gilbert stated.

Gilbert's went back into the ambulance business after Care Ambulance Service Inc., suddenly ceased operations at noon Friday.

Col. William O. Beasley of Caswell Beach, president of Care Ambulance, said the company had to close its doors because of "financial difficulties."

Col. Beasley said he did not know what the future held for Care Ambulance. "We are

insolvent at the present," he stated.

Gilbert's provided ambulance service in the Southport area from 1959 until June of 1975, when Care Ambulance took over.

Gilbert said Gilbert Ambulance Service, Inc., was incorporated in Brunswick County and North Carolina Friday to provide the ambulance service in the Southport area.

He said Gilbert Ambulance Service has agreed to provide emergency and transportation ambulance service in the Southport area for the next 90 days. "We hope to work out an arrangement to obtain monetary help after 90 days," he stated.

Residents of the Southport area needing ambulance service should call the Gilbert's Funeral Service number — 457-6161. The ambulance service will be

headquartered at the funeral home.

"Gilbert Ambulance has been certified by the state to provide ambulance service," Gilbert stated. "All our ambulance employees have permits certified by the state."

He said that Gilbert Ambulance can't honor the memberships sold by Care Ambulance or any other ambulance firm. "We are in no way associated with Care Ambulance," he stated.

Gilbert paid tribute to the help Col. Beasley provided in making sure that ambulance service never came to a stop during the change.

"Col. Beasley worked with us to make sure there would be no period of interrupted ambulance service in the Southport area," Gilbert stated. "He gave us his full cooperation."

Col. Beasley said that Care Ambulance has turned over to Gilbert Ambulance two vehicles. One is a new ambulance and the other is a vehicle Care purchased from Gilbert's.

Southport Communications, Inc., provided Gilbert Ambulance with the needed radio equipment to provide communications, Gilbert pointed out.

Gilbert said that Gilbert Ambulance will cooperate with the rescue squads in the county. "We will work with the rescue squads in the

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Investigation Is Asked

Post Office Will Not Issue Food Stamps, Director Says

Congressman Charlie Rose has been asked to look into why Brunswick County can't use post office issuance of food stamps at this time.

The request was made by Director Joel Webb of the Brunswick County Department of Social Services in a letter to Congressman Rose.

"It is my feeling that by refusing to take prompt action to allow Brunswick County to take advantage of this service, the post office has perpetrated a discriminatory act, with no apparent basis in present contract provisions," Webb said in the letter.

Copies of the letter were sent to Senator Robert Morgan (N.C.), Senator Jesse Helms (N.C.), Senator George McGovern, (S.D.), the postmaster general, Director Renee Hill of the state Department of Social Services, Secretary David Flaherty of the Department of Human Resources and Attorney General Rufus

Edmisten.

The director pointed out that 31 counties in North Carolina presently use post office issuance of food stamps. Each of the 31 counties pays the post office 80 cents per transaction for the service.

He pointed out that the state and the U.S. Postal Service are parties of the contract outlining the terms and conditions. The post office agrees to issue food stamps and the local governments sub-contract with the state to provide the service.

"To my knowledge, there is no provision in this contract restricting in anyway the number of local agencies that may take advantage of the food stamp issuance service," Webb stated.

But he said he had received "verbal confirmation" from the Customer Service branch of the U.S. Postal Office Sectional Center Facility in Fayetteville and the Food

assistance Branch of the North Carolina State Division of Social Services in Raleigh that security inspection of local post offices leading to the issuance of food stamps in Brunswick County will not be possible at this time.

"It is my understanding that the post office is not expanding the food stamp issuance - service to any new counties in North Carolina, and the whole matter is on hold status pending I don't know what," Webb stated.

He urged that Congressman Rose and the postmaster general "determine the reason for the delay and take action as appropriate to insure that counties in need of this service have the opportunity to avail themselves of it on a timely basis."

The county director also said that the state, which is a party to the contract, should take immediate action to insure "that these services are offered to Brunswick County

and to any other county desiring to take advantage of the service."

In addition to department distribution, Webb said that food stamps can be issued by the mail, banks and post offices.

He said the county has taken "all possible advantage of mail issuance and further expansion of this system is unfeasible."

He said that bank issuance is "a comparatively poor alternative and would not provide the full range of service" the county desperately needs.

"Brunswick County is one of the largest in the state, and

this matter is of desperate, pressing urgency to the food stamp recipients involved," Webb stated.

He pointed out that the county has about 4,500 food stamp recipients and each of the approximately 1,200 heads of the households must travel an average round trip of 40 miles to purchase the stamps. "Many pay for transportation at exorbitant rates and they can still afford it," the director explained.

Webb said the "transportation problems would be eliminated" if five or more post offices around the county issued food stamps.

Yaupon Taxes To Be Listed

Yaupon Beach property owners are "legally responsible" to pay their real and personal taxes by December 31 even if tax notices are not received, according to Town Clerk Claire Rees.

"Although some Yaupon Beach property owners did not receive tax notices until this month, 1975 taxes must be paid in December to avoid a 2-percent penalty charge to be assessed January 1, 1976, as required under "the Machinery Act of North Carolina," she said. An additional penalty of three-fourths of one percent is added for each month after January during which taxes remain unpaid.

"We apologize for the delay in mailing out 1975 tax notices. But the lateness was a direct result of the uncertainty and confusion generated by the recently-completed revaluation of all real property in Brunswick County."

"Town tax notices could not be prepared until after the

county tax abstracts were made liable to the town for copying, Mrs. Rees pointed out.

"The tax dollar enables the town to provide services to property owners. It is necessary that each property owner pay taxes in order to keep the tax rate as low as possible," she added.

Taxpayers are urged to contact the tax collector if they find errors in listings of property on tax notices, or if the real property valuation does not agree with Brunswick County tax notice.

Christmas Closings

City, county and state employees will have three days off for Christmas as their offices will be closed Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

Financial institutions will be closed Thursday and Friday, and Peoples Savings and Loan Association will be closed earlier — at noon on Wednesday.

There will be no post office service on Thursday, Christmas Day, but service will be on normal schedule other days during the week.

License Plate Stickers Go On Sale January 2

The new validation stickers for 1976 license plates will go on sale January 2, according to local license agent Christine Hewett of Shallotte.

The validation stickers will be on sale at the Shallotte Bookkeeping Service office on Highway 17 North, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

"For the first time, renewal of private passenger licenses will be by a validation sticker," Mrs. Hewett said. "The sticker is to be affixed to the upper right hand corner of the current license plate in the designated indenture."

Although stickers will be used for passenger cars, the renewal of all other classifications, including trucks, will continue to be by the annual license plate.

A license plate as well as a validation sticker will be issued for newly-acquired private passenger vehicles unless a plate is to be transferred.

The application cards necessary for obtaining 1976 validation stickers or license plates have already been placed in the mail in order to be delivered by January 1.

The Department of Motor Vehicles has made arrangements with the Shallotte post office to turn over to Mrs. Hewett renewal

cards it has been unable to deliver.

"Anyone failing to receive an application card may possibly find it at my office," Mrs. Hewett said. "Those who don't receive an application should apply to my office as early as possible so that there will be time to get one from Raleigh if I don't have it."

She said it will take from ten days to two weeks to obtain an application card

from the Department of Motor Vehicles in Raleigh.

Mrs. Hewett said persons must have renewal cards to be able to purchase their 1976 sticker or plate. She urged residents to complete the renewal application according to instructions before presenting it to her office for a sticker or plate.

North Carolina drivers must display the 1976 stickers or license plates by February 15.

Local Phone Rates Hiked

Southern Bell telephone customers in the Southport, Oak Island and Leland areas will have to dig deeper in their pockets to pay their monthly phone bills.

The State Utilities Commission granted Southern Bell Telephone Co. a \$36-million rate hike Friday and the right to charge for directory assistance calls.

The basic monthly residential rate on the Southport exchange will increase 30 cents to \$6.90. Telephones on the Wilmington exchange, which serves Leland, was to go up two cents to \$7.70. The increase is effective "immediately."

In addition, Bell's customers in the state will be charged for directory assistance (DA) calls after the first five each month. This will be the first time customers have had to pay for the DA service.

Starting January 15,

customers will be charged 20 cents each for each additional DA call made over the first five each month. But customers will receive a free DA for every long distance call completed within their area code in the month.

Directory assistance calls for numbers outside the customer's area code will continue to be free.

The commission also granted Southern Bell a hike in installation charges from \$15 to \$24.

The increase is the largest ever granted the company in North Carolina, it was pointed out.

Southern Bell has originally asked for a \$62.5-million rate hike. But the commission grant only about two-thirds of the requested boost, or \$36 million.

All but about \$5.5 million the rate hike has been placed

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Brochure For Area Is Printed In French

A brochure printed in French will be distributed in Canada to promote Brunswick County, members of the Resources Development Commission were told at their December meeting.

"This brochure is one of the first to be printed in a foreign language for distribution in a foreign country," Director Jackie Stephenson reported to the board.

He said that the commission was one of the sponsors of the Coastal North Carolina brochure, which is being printed in French. The state Travel and Promotion Division has approved the application.

"John Fisher, an author

who knows the Sunset Beach area of Brunswick County well and who works for one of the principal newspapers in Canada, will distribute these brochures in Canada to give us the best coverage possible," Stephenson said.

Stephenson said that directors should receive copies of the new county data manual within the week. It will have the same style cover, but the color will be changed.

The director presented the board with copies of an article prepared for publication in the milestone edition of The State magazine in January.

Stephenson said the staff is

proceeding with preparation of the county reator's brochure. He said a printout of the licensed realtors in the state has been received.

The board decided not to hold a Christmas dinner this year due to the late date.

The board voted unanimously to increase the salary of secretary Edna Watts to \$167.44, "which is commensurate with the county employee's salary scale." She has been employed for the probationary 60-day period.

Stephenson gave a report on the trip he made to New York with other county officials to have the county's bond rating increased.