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Southport delays decision - Page 2

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## Christina's wheelchair 'not that heavy' Malpractice settlement will pay for medical bills, college

By Holly Edwards  
Feature Editor

Christina Price has been awarded \$8 million to settle a malpractice lawsuit but she'd gladly give it up to be able to walk again. "The settlement will help take care of me and keep me out of the nursing home and help me go to college," Christina said this week. "But it sure isn't going to make me walk again. Nothing can make up for what that doc-

tor did to me. If anyone wants to trade places with me for \$8 million, they can be my guest."

Christina and her family filed the malpractice suit against Wilmington neurosurgeon Raymond Sattler, whom she alleged failed to take appropriate measures to prevent paralysis from spreading after she suffered a spinal cord injury in a 1994 automobile accident. Price's attorney will receive 40 percent of the settlement, leaving her \$4.8 million. Her father, Larry Price, said he will invest the money and

hopes to generate enough interest income to pay Christina's \$350,000 to \$500,000 annual medical bill.

Mr. Price said it is a relief to the family that they will no longer have to worry about her being institutionalized. The Prices recently moved from their house into a trailer to save money, and Mr. Price said he was prepared to liquidate all of his assets to keep Christina at home as long as possible.

"I don't know how to explain the relief we

feel," he said. "We were very well-prepared to sell out, retire and face bankruptcy -- whatever we had to do to keep Christina out of a nursing home."

Christina's mother, Dena Price, said all she wanted from the lawsuit was enough money to take care of Christina.

"I love my kid better than life itself," she said, fighting back tears. "I pray everyday she'll get up and walk. I'd give my life if I

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PRICE

## Airport proposal

### SBSD suggests public input on expansion plan

By Richard Nubel  
Municipal Editor

Betting Brunswick County Airport commissioners will get an earful, Southeast Brunswick Sanitary District commissioners said Monday they will ask the airport board to hold a public hearing on a proposed runway expansion project that may displace as many as 400 district residents.

If airport commissioners refuse, the district will hold its own public hearing on the proposed \$7.3-million Brunswick County Airport expansion project, anticipated in the next five years.

In other business involving the airport, sanitary district commissioners Monday refused to act on a request to provide the facility with sanitary sewer service until it is determined whether the airport property is inside or outside district bounds. Those residing outside the district pay a higher rate for service. District commissioners also resolved to write Federal Aviation Administration officials to complain the airport does nothing to prevent pilots from engaging in "stunt" flying over populated areas.

The proposed project by which the airport runway would be lengthened from 4,000 to 5,000 feet drew most of SBSBD commissioners' attention, as the plan did last month. The airport board is awaiting word on its application for a \$6.57-million federal grant supported by U. S. Sen. Lauch Faircloth. That grant would be matched by \$730,000 from Brunswick County.

The expansion, as now planned, would require the acquisition of 56 additional acres of land by the airport -- most of it from five mobile home parks in Southeast

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The Easter Bunny opened a busy schedule of appearances Saturday at the annual Southport Parks and Recreation Department egg hunt -- and bunny hug -- in Franklin Square Park. Long Beach plans another egg hunt for youngsters at 10 a.m. Saturday in Middleton Park, and a couple egg-ventures will be held at Boiling Spring Lakes.

Photo by Jim Harper

## East Beach

# Time, tide taking toll

By Richard Nubel  
Municipal Editor

A small, one-story oceanfront cottage with the letters "Gilly" hung to one side of the doorframe sat on rails Tuesday, lifted from its foundation at 4921 East Beach Drive and awaiting the moving crew.

Two lots down, at 4917 East Beach, lies the broken cement block foundation of what was once someone else's beachfront cottage. It is a cottage that ran out of room on the beachfront and had to be moved.

All along East Beach Drive, from 58th Street westward, houses are disappearing, losing the battle to Mother Nature.

East of "Gilly," Milligan's Moving had a crew working Tuesday, placing a home on pilings

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"We've been trying to create a dune with trucked-in sand. But people stop me and ask, "Aren't you the turtle lady? Where are they going to nest?"

Tina Pritchard

## Maybe Brunswick?

# Convention center considered in area

By Terry Pope  
County Editor

It didn't take much of a sales pitch before the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners bought into the idea of building a regional hotel and convention center in southeastern North Carolina.

Wilmington mayor Hamilton Hicks told the board Monday he is drumming-up support for a \$750,000 planning grant he hopes the N. C. General Assembly will allocate next month. The funds would come from a projected \$1-billion surplus state legislators are

expected to appropriate during the short session in May.

"This is an opportunity to show teamwork among the communities in the area," said Hicks, who plans to include Pender and New Hanover counties and area beach towns.

The planning grant would help plan and choose a site for the project that would include a convention center to seat up to 10,000 persons, along with a hotel and concert hall. The center would benefit the entire community, so each county would have a representative on an authority that Hicks said he will ask the assembly to appoint.

The authority would work with planners to site a facility and administer the \$750,000 planning grant. All five county commissioners agreed a convention center is needed, and chairman Jo Ann Bellamy Simmons said Brunswick County would be a good location.

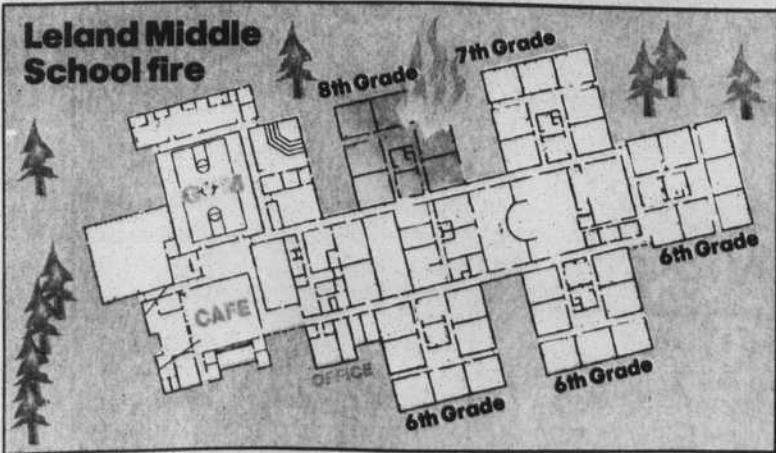
"When your comments came out in the paper from the Pender County meeting, I was surprised," Ms. Simmons told Hicks. "But I said, I definitely thought we needed a convention center, and I'm sure you were talking about putting it in Brunswick County."

"If that's the best location, then so be it," said Hicks. "I certainly would have no problem putting it in Brunswick County."

There is no place to seat a large audience for concerts or other stage programs in southeastern North

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## Leland school reopens April 20



By Holly Edwards  
Feature Editor

Leland Middle School faculty and students are "united in their sense of loss" in the wake of a fire that damaged most of the school building and destroyed an entire wing, said principal Diana Mintz.

"We all have a lot of emotion invested in this school, so this hurts," she said. "But at the same time, this gives us a sense of focus and direction and a goal to work toward."

That goal is to get most of the school ready for classes by April 20 when students are scheduled to return from spring break.

Brunswick County school board members late last week approved a plan to clean-up most of the fire damage, seal-off a wing that sustained the most severe damage and rent six mobile units for additional classroom space for

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## Damage may reach \$3.5 mil

By Terry Pope  
County Editor

Final estimates place damage to Leland Middle School at \$3.5 million from last week's blaze that demolished the eighth grade pod and blanketed the remaining classroom wings with black soot and water.

Brunswick County fire marshal Cecil Logan said it will cost \$2 million to rebuild the wing of classrooms where the fire began

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