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## 'Wal-Mart' rezoning approved

By Terry Pope  
County Editor

Neighbors fear a Wal-Mart shopping center proposed next to Dutchman Acres near Long Beach Road will create more traffic and noise than they can stand, along with falling prices -- on their property values.

A rezoning request approved Monday by the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners clears the way for commercial development of the 92-acre tract just west of Long Beach Road on the north side of N. C. 211.

"I see this as a positive thing," said resident Brian Bell. "I think a majority of people will benefit from it being in the community. I see sales taxes. I see payroll taxes. I will benefit for I won't have to drive so far."

Commissioners asked for a standing vote of people in the audience to see how many were for or against the rezoning request filed by C-1 Commercial Properties, controlled by Wilmington attorney Jeff Zimmer and Herb Zimmer. About two dozen stood in favor of the Wal-Mart proposal and about a dozen stood in opposition.

"I suppose there's a whole lot more that's going to be put in here," said Southport attorney Grover Gore, representing Dutchman Acres property owners. "These folks that live here, and are going to die here, are scared because they don't know how to fight big money. I'm just here to tell you that they picked the wrong spot."

Long Beach attorney Tom Heller, representing C-1 Commercial Properties, said Wal-Mart or any store that chooses to locate in the shopping center "has a vested interest in making the traffic flow." He said the developers will draft a traffic plan to deal with the extra cars off Long Beach Road and N. C. 211 likely to file into the shopping center.

Traffic was also a sticky point when the issue was first debated before the Brunswick County Planning Board last month. Board member John Thompson cast the only vote against the recommendation to county commissioners that the tract ought to be rezoned. His objections were based on the lack of good roads able to handle the extra traffic flow.

The shopping center would bring to the Southport-Oak Island community a major department store and retail outlet. The closest Wal-Mart now is in Shallotte, about 25 miles away. The site, however, abuts church property and the Dutchman Acres subdivision, where some residents fear shopping center will generate noise, loitering teenagers and declining property values.

Planning board members forwarded the request with stipulations. See Wal-Mart, page 11

## First day at school

'My sister told me it was pretty fun.'

Kennon Young



## School bells ring Tuesday

By Laura Kimball  
Feature Editor

Cars were parked haphazardly along the roadside.

Bewildered parents and students swarmed the crowded halls looking for new classrooms and teachers.

Strict arrangements were made for prompt afternoon rendezvous in the parking lot. Tuesday was the first day of school at Southport Elementary.

In the middle of the madness was five-year-old Kennon Young, calm and composed for his first day of kindergarten. His Carolina Panthers backpack contained washable markers, colored pencils and a box of tissues -- the necessities.

The frenzy of the first day of school didn't phase Kennon. He and his parents, Rick and Teresa, and his sister, Alexandra, 8, just moved to Southport a week ago from Burlington. The first day of school, in contrast with the stress of moving to a new town and

See First day, page 14

Kennon Young (above) and other Southport Elementary students took one of life's big steps Tuesday morning. (Photos by Jim Harper)

## St. James Plantation Rapid growth creating talk of new town

By Richard Nubel  
Municipal Editor

Rapid growth and greater demand for traditionally urban services has led some St. James Plantation residents to conclude the exclusive, gated community should incorporate, joining the ranks of 18, and possibly 19, other municipalities in Brunswick County.

A 19th Brunswick County community could seek incorporation early next year if, as expected, old Calabash on September 15 votes to end its nine-year municipal partnership with Carolina Shores and Carolina Shores opts in a second referendum to become a town in its own right.

St. James Plantation Property Owners Association president Gary Tagtmeyer said that community may be Brunswick County's 20th municipality if, as he anticipates, 85 percent of all registered voters there sign petitions seeking incorporation by the N. C. General Assembly.

"We hope to have that done very shortly," Tagtmeyer said this week. "Certainly before the next (General Assembly) session."

Tagtmeyer said growth at St. James Plantation has exceeded even its developer's wildest dreams. Already 350 homes have been built at St. James and an estimated 150

'We're doing this from the standpoint of looking down the road and providing services in the most economical way.'

Gary Tagtmeyer  
POA president

more are under construction. St. James development president John Atkinson recently reported homesite sales on the 3,700 acres under development topped \$10 million in the first six months of 1998. Some estimate St. James eventually will be a community of up to 5,000 persons.

"We've just grown," Tagtmeyer said of the property owners association which was begun eight years ago, some three years before he

See St. James, page 9

## Brunswick County High schools' test scores up

By Laura Kimball  
Feature Editor

Even though a new year has begun, school officials are excited about last year.

Preliminary data from last year's testing indicates that all three high schools in the county were exemplary, which means that achievement was ten percent greater than expected.

Achievement is measured by assessing how many students scored a three or four on end-of-grade tests, which means that, according to state standards, they are proficient in that subject.

Among the three county schools, West Brunswick High improved in every subject.

South Brunswick High improved in every category but Writing, where scores dropped from 59.4 to 51.3 percent proficient.

North Brunswick High students improved in every subject area except Economic/Legal/Political Systems, where scores went from 84.6 to 75 percent proficient, and in U. S. History, where the percentage of proficient students dropped from 43.8 to 31.4.

In contrast, North Brunswick High students excelled in writing scores. See Schools, page 14

## City volunteers begin live oak survey

By Laura Kimball  
Feature Editor

There are a lot of live oak trees in Southport. This is what overwhelmed volunteers who offered to help evaluate the city's live oaks are saying as they count, measure, take soil samples and individually rate each tree in the city. "We were so wildly enthusiastic at first, but after we did two or three trees we thought, 'This is a big job,'" said Donna Monday, one of the volunteers.

Volunteer groups were organized last week after city officials realized a need to determine

how much damage has been done by the live oak kermid, a scale insect. The insect sucks sap from trees, and many live oaks are showing signs of damage, like dead leaves.

Some experts think the huge scale population may be an indirect result of citywide spraying for mosquitoes because the chemical that kills the mosquitoes may also be killing natural predators of the scale insect.

About ten volunteer groups, of about three people each, were organized to perform checks on the trees. The data will be used to determine the magnitude of the scale infestation and to look for common denominators in

the epidemic, like proximity to roads.

In the meantime, the fire department has begun spraying trees on city property with high-pressure water, in hopes of knocking the scales off, and volunteers have gone to work.

Monday and her volunteer group, which includes Herb Harrison and Sandy Mitchell, were examining trees Monday morning along East 8th Street. Each volunteer group must cover a square area that is 1,500 feet on each side. The groups carry enlarged maps of the city so they can plot each tree on the map. Monday's volunteer group has divided its

responsibilities.

Harrison measures the girth, height and span of the tree, Mitchell takes soil samples around the tree and Monday records all the information on a form. They all look for blights or problems on the tree, like scales, galls and dead limbs, and then they agree on an overall rating for the tree.

All of these tasks must be done on each live oak tree. It takes the group about 15 to 20 minutes per tree, Monday said.

But evaluation isn't the only difficult task. Many volunteers are having a hard time dis-

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