

People who helped the aquaculture program come to fruition, including last week to celebrate the project. college board members, guests and college officials, dug into the ground

## Brunswick Community College

# Aquaculture program a splash

By Laura Kimball Feature Editor

Ground was broken last week on an area that will accommodate Brunswick Community College's Southeastern North Carolina Aquaculture Center.

The focal point of the center will be 22 ponds for fish farming and several buildings located on the college's main campus, off U. S. 17 near Supply.

JoAnn Bellamy Simmons, chair of

the Brunswick County Board of Economic Development Admini-Commissioners, was present at the groundbreaking. As a member of the farming community, she said, she can appreciate what the college is

"The aquaculture project will give Brunswick County farmers and other residents a chance to expand and diversify their crops," she said. "The aquaculture project will translate into jobs for Brunswick County.'

The project is part of a \$2-million

stration (EDA) grant. To qualify for the federal EDA grant, the college had to produce funds that at least matched what they were given. The college's share of the cost amounts to over \$3 million, which was invested in the newly completed science and health building.

Components of the project include the ponds, which will have a 17-acre water surface; field buildings, including a classroom building, a hatchery and wet lab, a recirculation building and two storage buildings; the classroom and laboratory building; equipment and supplies; and the expansion of the Industrial Education Center at Leland.

According to Dr. Michael Reaves, president of the college, the aquaculture program has been in the works since 1992. The program actually started in 1994, with students using area fish farms for hands-on experience.

"The future for aquaculture in North Carolina, and in this region, is bright," he said at the ceremony.

Students of the aquaculture program receive two-year associate degrees. Graduates are equipped for a variety of jobs, like working for a state or federal fish hatchery or opening their own aquaculture operation.

Much of the excitement over the program stems from the fact that fish farming is such a growing industry in this area, according to Thomas Ellis, director of aquaculture and natural resources for the N. C. Department of Agriculture, who was also at the groundbreaking.

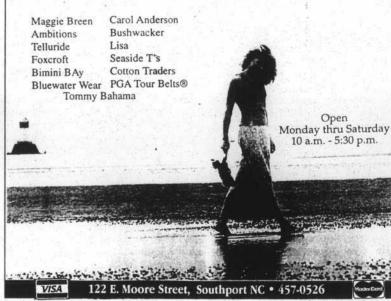
"Shellfish and finfish are the fastest-growing form of agriculture," he said.

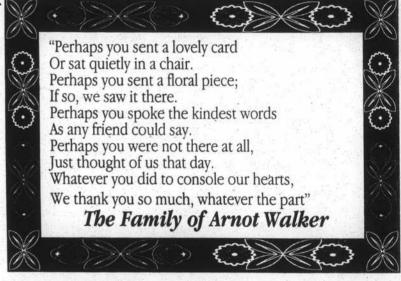
After the groundbreaking, everyone was invited to a dinner of fried catfish, a common product of fish farms, to celebrate the occasion.



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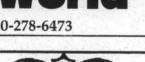




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