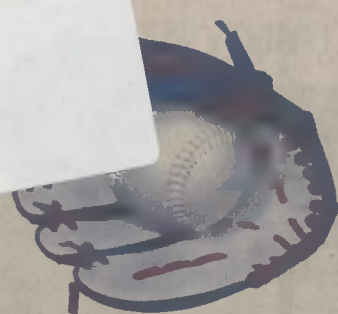


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# BERTIE RESPONDS TO COVID-19

## Crowds limited to 100

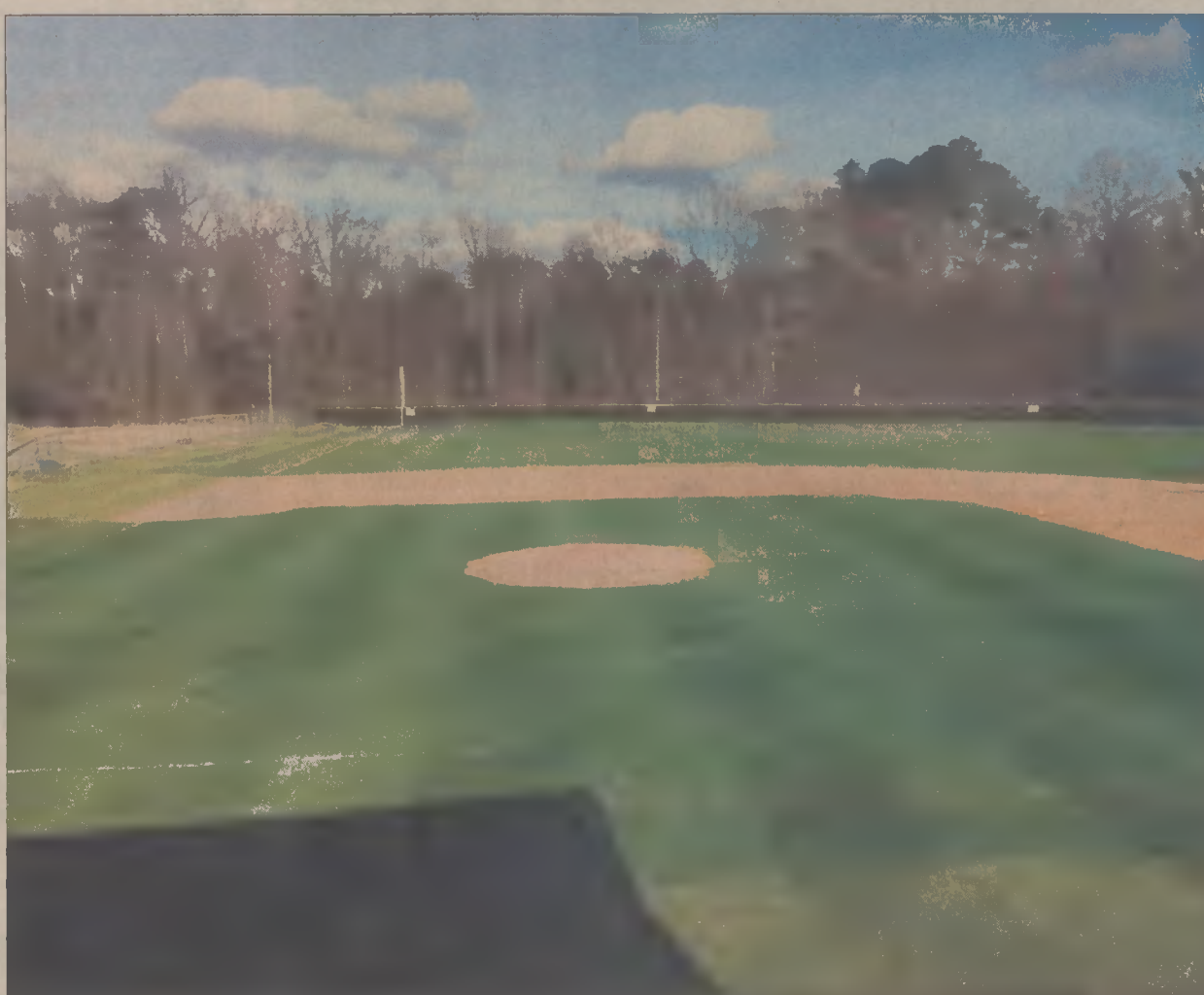
THADD WHITE  
Bertie Ledger-Advance

With fears for the spread of the COVID-19 virus, N.C. Governor Roy Cooper has mandated an end to gatherings of 50 people or more.

Executive Order No. 117 closed schools for two weeks, but also placed a ban on mass gatherings. The governor is allowed to ban mass gatherings under North Carolina law, with the concurrence of the Council of State. He received the agreement from the group – which has both Democratic and Republican elected officials – on Saturday.

The executive order defines mass gatherings as any event or convening that brings together more than 100 people in a single room or single space at the same time. The order covers such places as auditoriums, stadiums, arena, large conference rooms, meeting halls, theaters or any other confined spaces – indoor and

See GATHERINGS, 8



BOBBY HARMON / Contributed Photo

Monday was a beautiful day for baseball, yet the Bertie High School Baseball Field was quiet and empty. N.C. Governor Roy Cooper closed schools for two weeks beginning Mon-

day. The decision came days after the N.C. High School Athletic Association suspended all spring sports through April 6.

## Schools closed 2 weeks

THADD WHITE  
Bertie Ledger-Advance

N.C. Governor Roy Cooper took the unprecedented step of closing the state's schools for at least two weeks due to concerns about the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

COVID-19, commonly referred to as the Coronavirus, has led to school closings in at least 30 states across the country.

"We do not have the luxury of a wait-and-see approach," Gov. Cooper said. "These are hard decisions, but they are necessary so we can learn more about the virus. We do not want any regrets in the rearview mirror, and I am guided by one objective – doing what we must to keep people from getting sick and to make sure those who do can get excellent care."

The Executive Order closes schools Monday, March 16 and for a two-week period afterwards. The governor said the closure allows time for

See SCHOOLS, 8

## County: State of Emergency declared

THADD WHITE  
Bertie Ledger-Advance

Both Bertie County and municipal leaders have taken steps to keep the public and public employees safe in the wake of the COVID-10 virus.

While procedures are being introduced throughout the county in relation to stopping

the spread of COVID-19, commonly called the Coronavirus, it is not a time to panic.

"The fact that we are so rural here in Bertie County gives us an edge," Bertie County Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper said. "We are not like Raleigh as it relates to populations. We are unlike the major cities, and it does put us at an

advantage.

"This is simply a time for concern, not panic," he stressed.

Early Tuesday afternoon, Bertie County did declare of State of Emergency, which allows the county to be eligible for resources, funding and the authority to protect public health

See EMERGENCY, 8

## Ride of Pride: ECU professors meet Bertie folks

BY GENE MOTLEY  
For the Bertie Ledger-Advance

WINDSOR – The Purple and Gold East Carolina University bus was spotted in Bertie County last Monday, but it was not transporting athletes.

Instead, it carried recently contracted professors, most of whom were making their first trip to the East.

The tour is also part of the Rural Prosperity Initiative. With its natural resources, food, energy, and recreation, rural America is sustaining the country; and to better understand the rural landscape, programs like the Rural Prosperity Initiative are shining a spotlight on how



GENE MOTLEY / For the Bertie Ledger-Advance

Windsor Tourism Director Billy Smithwick (right) talks to ECU professors about the Cashie Treehouse Village.

that sustainability will benefit everyone.

The tour, now in its third year, is a two-day ride from

Greenville with stops around eastern North Carolina, and is designed to introduce ECU faculty members to the East, and give them an opportunity to meet the land and the people the University serves.

It also gives researchers a chance to meet their peers from other academic backgrounds and disciplines that hopefully lead to new research projects that benefit the region.

"We know the eastern region has some challenges, but we also know the area has produced some amazing solutions," said Dr. Mary Farwell, ECU Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research, Economic Development, and

Engagement, and the tour director.

Among last week's stops in Bertie County at Windsor's Roanoke/Cashie River Center where they heard from Windsor Mayor Jim Hoggard, Windsor Tourism and Marketing Director Billy Smithwick and Bertie County Executive Director for Economic Development Steve Biggs.

"For us, we want them to look at the effects of natural disasters and the economic impact associated with that," said Hoggard. "We've been flooded four times, including twice in 13 days of each other with Matthew and Ju-

See ECU, 9

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**GOOD MORNING, JACK WILLIFORD OF WINDSOR**

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