

Bertie Ledger-Advance

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COVID cases dramatically rise in week

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While moving to the newly created Safer at Home Phase 2.5 may be good news for North Carolina, it may not be for residents of Bertie County.

While the state's averages are trending in a more positive direction, Bertie County's cases of COVID-19 continue to soar. The number of cases – marked at 495 by the N.C. Department of Health and Human

Services Dashboard as of Tuesday – has risen by 54 in just one week.

Bertie isn't alone as neighbors Hertford County and Halifax County also have significantly higher cases than their neighbors. Hertford County also grew significantly last week, going up 48 cases to 597 while Halifax County, who leads Bertie's neighbors at 910, grew only by 26 cases.

Bertie's case num-

See COVID, 3



FILE PHOTO

Places like the Cashie Treehouse Village help bring tourists to Bertie County every year. Last year, those tourists spent over \$15 million in the county.

Census date looming

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It's not too late. Those who still need to be counted as part of the 2020 Census – and there are quite a few according to official numbers – can still do so through the end of September.

"The citizens and officials have done a great job, but we still have a ways to go," Bertie County Commission

Chairman Ronald D. Wesson said recently. "Our goal is to exceed the state average, and while we are making progress, we are not there yet."

Bertie County currently sits at a 51.5 percent response rate while North Carolina has a response rate of 61.2.

Some towns in Bertie County are doing well –

See CENSUS, 3

Tourism brings in \$15 million in 2019

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Visitors to Bertie County poured \$15 million into the local economy in 2019, according to a new report from Visit NC.

That investment – which helps alleviate tax burdens, creates jobs and raises the standard of living in Bertie County – was up almost three percent from 2018.

"Despite limited retail lodg-

ing in Bertie County, we still grew our domestic visitor spending in 2019," said Lewis Hoggard, Executive Director of the Windsor/Bertie Chamber of Commerce. "We have to continue to highlight our natural resources and provide convenient access to those resources."

"Our waterways are second to none in their beauty and variety," Hoggard added.

The report also finds there

are 50 people employed in the travel and tourism industry in Bertie County. The total payroll created by the tourism industry topped \$1.5 million last year.

In addition to the jobs created, sales tax revenue generated in Bertie County totaled \$830,000 through state sales and excise taxes and taxes on personal and corporate in-

See TOURISM, 8

Untapped: Keeping crop 'legal' challenges farmers

DEBORAH GRIFFIN
The Daily Reflector

At first glance, raising hemp in eastern North Carolina seems as though it could be the saving grace for farmers seeking to replace crops like tobacco that are no longer as viable as they once were.

Demand for hemp oil, (cannabidiol, commonly abbreviated CBD), is growing by leaps and bounds annually. CBD users attest to its ability to alleviate symptoms of anxiety, insomnia, and a myriad of chronic pains, although few studies have been conducted to back up the claims.

It is expected that consumer sales in the United States



DEBORAH GRIFFIN / The Daily Reflector

Hemp plants look like small trees growing in rows on a farm in Martin County.

of cannabidiol products will reach around \$1.8 billion by

2022 – an increase up from about \$500 million in 2018. By 2025, it is projected to be a \$26 billion business, according to market analysts.

Because of this rising demand, it seems growing hemp, a crop suited to eastern North Carolina's climate, would be a foregone conclusion.

Unfortunately, the reality is not so cut and dried.

Laws, regulations Many laws and regulations surrounding the once outlawed plant are still being debated and can be confusing. Federal and state laws don't always agree.

State farmers – who must

See UNTAPPED, 3

Roanoke Connect garners grant

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AULANDER – Roanoke Connect Holdings is one of nine companies awarded grants to bring high-speed internet service to rural counties.

Roanoke Connect, a subsidiary of Roanoke Electric Cooperative was awarded the grant to bring high-speed in-

ternet to Bertie County, which was one of 11 counties to benefit. The others include Martin, Edgecombe, Columbus, Duplin, Graham, Greene, Nash, Robeson, Rockingham and Swain counties.

"We are pleased Roanoke Connect Holdings (RCH) is a recipient of the N.C. Department of

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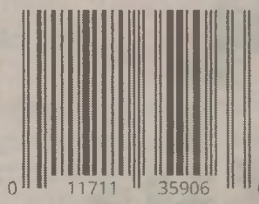
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