

THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF MADISON COUNTY

81st Year No. 14

PUBLISHED WEEKLY IN THE COUNTY SEAT AT MARSHALL, N.C.

WEDNESDAY, April 7, 1982

15c Per Copy

Block Grants: Keep It Simple, Honest

The consensus of the 600-plus western North Carolina administrators, government officials and others at the block grant hearing at Tuscola High School near Waynesville Thursday night was: keep the state red tape to a minimum in doling out the federal block grant money and keep the competition among local agencies and government fair.

The hearing, conducted by seven of Gov. Jim Hunt's cabinet members, was the last of six held across the state to get public ideas on how federal block grant money should be spent.

The participants at Tuscola were joined by

others at Appalachian State University in Boone by a special slow scan television hookup. A still image of the speaker appeared on a large television screen every 35 seconds while the voice was transmitted instantly.

Nine block grants, which have or soon will replace federal funding for a variety of programs, were the topics of discussion at the hearing.

While the public's message of "keep it simple, and honest" was conveyed to the cabinet members, local program administrators also called for future or continued funding for specific pro-

grams. But, Dr. Sarah Morrow, secretary of the state Department of Human Resources, pointed out that while few federal programs would be eliminated most would experience an average of 25 percent reduction in federal funds.

Many of the cuts have already taken effect, she said. Programs dealing with maternal and child health care were cut nearly 35 percent when a block grant replaced traditional federal funding last June.

The block grants are designed to give state officials greater flexibility to fund local programs,

but concern over red tape at the state level was voiced by several speakers at the hearing.

Some participants expressed concern about the block grants being used as "political footballs."

After attending the hearing, Madison County Board of Commissioners Chairman James Ledford indicated Friday night that the county will not suffer any undue hardships with the block grant system.

"I don't see where we're going to have any problems," Ledford said.



Photo by N. Hancock

FOREST FIRE — Tony Webb and Billy Dillingham of the N.C. Forest Service remained on duty Sunday to keep watch for rekindled

blazes at the forest fire which damaged some 120 acres in the Sleepy Valley Community west of Hot Springs.

Wild Fire Damages 120 Acres In Sleepy Valley Community

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

A forest fire which swept over 120 acres of wooded mountainside in the Sleepy Valley Community west of Hot Springs Saturday was brought under control late Sunday afternoon after some 50 firefighters fought the blaze for nearly 30 hours, according to David Brown of the N.C. Forest Service.

The fire, which was mainly confined to underbrush and the ground, swept through the Plum Tree Hollow housing development pushed by 50-60 mph gusts of wind. It was the largest of several weekend fires reported in Western North Carolina as record-high winds and dry conditions contributed to numerous fires which damaged thousands of acres across North Carolina.

State and U.S. Forest Service firefighters were joined by the Hot Springs and Marshall volunteer fire departments in battling the blaze which began early Saturday morning. Brown credited the additional help of the Mar-

Statewide Burning Ban Still In Effect

shall department with preventing the fire from damaging one house in the development.

At noon Sunday, Brown said most of the blaze had been extinguished, but announcing the fire as under control would be made later in the afternoon.

Officials issued a statewide ban on all burning at 8 a.m. Sunday morning, and Brown said the ban would not be lifted until after a "good, drenching rain."

Brown said over 30 firefighters remained at the site Sunday afternoon to prevent any new fires from breaking out.

Tony Webb, state service forester stationed in Madison County, said the firefighters were fortunate that several roads had been cut in the housing development allowing access to the blazes. "But the roads didn't act as firebreaks because the winds jumped

the fire across the roads in several places," he said.

No one was hurt and no personal property was damaged, according to Brown.

Brown said the cause of the fire had not been determined Sunday, but "some people have rumored that it was started by someone burning trash."

High gusting winds fanned the fire out of control and prevented an N.C. Forest Service plane from dropping more than two loads of chemicals on the blaze.

By 9 a.m. Saturday, some 40 firefighters were digging trenches and raking with fire rakes to contain the blaze.

The forest service said another fire was reported in the county Sunday. A half-acre of timber was reported burning in the Beech Glen community.

Youth Rescued From Fall Ramsey Praises Schools, Criticizes Local Press

A 14-year-old boy was rescued by Hot Springs emergency medical technicians and members of the Hot Spring Volunteer Fire Department Sunday after he fell some 75 feet down a cliff while on a fishing trip with his family.

Gary Lloyd, of Fletcher, fell down the rock cliff after wandering off from his family while they were fishing in the French Broad River near a railroad trestle approximately one and a half miles south of Hot Springs, according to Joe Griffey of the Hot Springs Police Department.

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By BEVERLY BRUCE
Intern Writer

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," was the central theme of Liston Ramsey's address Saturday night at the annual banquet for the Madison County chapter of the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE).

Speaking at the banquet held at Madison High School, N.C. House Speaker Ramsey complimented the Madison County educational system and said he felt the system had received "unjust and unwarranted criticism" from the local press.

According to Ramsey, the life of a child is a family affair. "The schools can't do it

all," he said, bringing a round of applause from the local teachers.

As for the 1982-83 fiscal year budget for North Carolina schools, Ramsey said, "We'll have to cut the coat to fit the cloth."

Ramsey said public confidence (in the schools) is important and that everyone should stand together to back education. "I'm sold on education," he said.

Other speakers at the dinner included Dr. Bobby Jean Rice, schools supervisor, who gave an update on the progress of accreditation of Madison High. Rice also commented on the improved grade scores of the high school competency

tests and the overall improvements at the elementary level.

Superintendent Robert L. Edwards presented a certificate of appreciation to Mrs. Hettie Rice, a retired teacher from the Walnut area, for her "outstanding service to the Madison County educational system."

Beverly Hough, teacher at Mars Hill Elementary School, was recognized as Madison County Teacher of the Year for 1981-82. The TOY award was presented by Nancy Allen, Madison County Terry Sanford Award winner, from Marshall Elementary School.

Members of the Madison County Board of Education



Liston Ramsey

and the county commissioners were recognized by Rozella Ramsey, president of the local NCAE chapter.

The Madison High pep band provided entertainment emphasizing the banquet theme, "Spring Is Popping Out All Over."

Mars Hill Library Dedicated

The Mars Hill Community Library was dedicated Saturday as Marion Johnson, chief North Carolina library consultant, said the people of Mars Hill have demonstrated "a commitment to improve community education and cultural life."

Speaking to the 75 people attending the dedication ceremony Saturday morning, Mrs. Johnson congratulated the Mars Hill community for carrying out the building project and challenged the community and library system "to use your dollars to build the book collection."

The dedication of the new \$200,000 building was the culmination of seven years work by the Mars Hill Community Development Council, the Madison County Library Board of Trustees and various

local agencies and citizens.

Numerous officials attended the ceremony including Mars Hill Mayor Bill Powell, County Commission Chairman James Ledford, N.C. House Speaker Liston Ramsey, U.S. Congressman Bill Hendon, and Wayne McDevitt, director of the governor's Western Office in Asheville.

Dr. Evelyn Underwood, chairman of the Mars Hill Library Committee, recognized the many individuals who were instrumental in contributing to the completion of the library, and gave special recognition to Mrs. Peggy Dotterer for "starting it all." Mrs. Dotterer is credited with spearheading the county library system in 1955.

The new facility, containing some 3,500 square feet of floor space, was designed by ar-



Johnson

chitects Wayne Roberts of Mars Hill and J. Bertram King of Asheville.

Commissioners Hear EMS Improvements, Appoint Council

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

With Emergency Medical Services Week (April 25 - May 1) just around the corner, the Madison County Board of Commissioners heard a lot of EMS talk from county EMS Director Mildred West and appointed an EMS advisory council at Friday night's commissioners meeting.

West introduced Mike Morgan, Region B EMS representative, who explained to the commissioners the new ambulance call report (ACR) forms that local ambulance service personnel would be using in the future. According

to Morgan, information filled out on the ACRs will be sent to Raleigh and returned to the county on computer readouts monthly, and will assist in the EMS billing process and will give detailed documentation in case of law suits filed against the service.

The North Carolina Office of Emergency Medicine provides the forms and the computerized service at no cost to the county, Morgan said.

Morgan also told the commissioners that Asheville-Biltmore Technical College would set up a continuing education program for EMS training of local personnel if the board would assure

participation in the program. The commissioners went on record to agree to urge all EMS personnel to attend the six-month training schedule. EMS personnel would attend the classes three or four hours one night a month.

In other ambulance service related business, the commissioners appointed a county EMS advisory council, subject to the acceptance of those appointed. Appointed to the council were Ed Morton, director of the county health department; David Caldwell, county finance officer; Carol E. Anderson, Hot Springs fire chief; Eddie Fox, Mars Hill assistant fire chief; Larry West,

athletic trainer, Madison High; Dr. Chipper Jones, Hot Springs Health Program; Lloyd Moore, county emergency preparedness coordinator; Jackie Davis, Marshall fire chief; and Voelck Penland.

The commissioners also approved the naming of Doris Ward Conner and Toby Sprinkle as volunteer substitutes for the county EMS.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Passed a resolution giving the go-ahead to a fire district tax referendum for the Spring Creek township.
- Approved a resolution and went on

report the "visibly opposing" a proposed South Carolina law to close the Hot Springs store in front of the economic development and safety impact on the county.

- Approved two road improvement petitions; one for seven tenths mile of Bailey Mountain Road in Mars Hill and the other for two tenths mile of Licensee Creek Road (Sh...

- Heard, but took no action on a request from Gordon Randle, Mars Hill fire chief, for an...
- Approved a resolution and went on

said the county has been allocating \$750 annually to the department, and that he would like to see an increase of \$1,300 for the coming fiscal year, making the total county allocation \$2,050.

Commission Chairman James Ledford told the commissioners he "highly recommends" increasing the allotment, but pointed out that they would have to look at the new budget before making a final decision as to the amount.

- Announced receiving final approval for constructing 40 units of public housing in Mars Hill by the county Housing Authority.

Have a Glorious Easter

From The Staff of The News Record