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## Holiday Pageantry

It was beginning to look a lot like Christmas in Marshall this past weekend, with the annual Christmas Pageant and the renewed holiday parade. Above left, the three wise men from the pageant have their moment in the spotlight. Mary and Joseph (above right) make their journey toward Bethlehem. Right, WLOS-TV weatherman Bob Caldwell was the master of ceremonies at Saturday's parade.

BILL STUDENC PHOTOS

## Schools To Continue Using Teen Drivers

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

School systems in North Carolina will be allowed to continue to use 17-year-old bus drivers through the end of the current school year.

That was the ruling last week from the U.S. Department of Labor -- a ruling relayed Monday night to the Madison County Board of Education by Robert Edwards, superintendent.

Gov. James Martin had requested last month that North Carolina schools be allowed to continue using 17-year-old bus drivers because school systems would have difficulty finding qualified adult drivers.

The U.S. Department of Labor, which had announced in August that school systems would have until Dec. 31 to replace teen-age drivers, granted Martin's request.

Under a ruling announced last week, 17-year-olds now currently driving school buses will be allowed to continue to drive through the remainder of the school year.

In Madison County, that ruling will affect five 17-year-old drivers -- all of them drivers for Madison High School.

Principal David Wyatt of Madison High School said he was glad to hear of the ruling.

"I probably could have found replacements (for the 17-year-olds), but it would not have been easy," Wyatt said.

"I think we'll be able to find adult drivers for next year, but it won't be as easy without the students and I think the students have had a good record," he said.

Ivan Randolph, principal at North Buncombe High School, said the ruling means that seven bus drivers at his school won't be out of a job.

"It's not right to take a man's job away from him if he's been working all year," Randolph said Tuesday.

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## Commissioners 'Fine-Tune' Property Revaluation Plans

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

The Madison County Board of Commissioners took steps Tuesday designed to "fine-tune" the process of revaluation of property in the county.

The board, after meeting with representatives of the N.C. Department of Revenue and a company conducting the revaluation of Madison County property, unanimously agreed to adopt an amendment to the schedule of real property values approved in October.

The amendment is simply a more specific listing of the different types of property that may be owned by Madison taxpayers, said Larry Leake, county attorney.

The purpose of the expanded schedule of real property values is to help explain to the taxpayer why his property has been assessed at a certain amount, Leake said.

"This should make the job of the Tax Supervisor's Of-

fice a little easier in coming up with values and a little easier to explain to the taxpayer how that value was arrived at," he said.

If a taxpayer wants to know how appraisers reached a certain figure for the value of his property, the Tax Supervisor's Office can consult the amended schedule of property values.

The expanded schedule was developed by the N.C. Department of Revenue and is based on a standard schedule, but has also been slightly modified for Madison County, Leake said.

"We think this will take the judgement out of the whole process and make it a lot more objective as opposed to subjective," Leake said.

"The commissioners and the Tax Supervisor's Office want to make doubly certain that all taxpayers are

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## Weaverville Considers Water Improvements

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

Weaverville officials will be looking during the next few months at ways to improve the quality of water delivered to customers in the town.

Among the steps that may be taken are the replacement of old water lines, the construction of new lines and the addition of filters.

That was one of the topics discussed Saturday by members of the newly elected Weaverville Town Council, who met at the Ramada Inn West in Asheville in their second planning

retreat. Council members had met Nov. 14 to begin making plans for the town's future during the next two years.

Saturday's session was designed to continue that informal dialogue among council members, said Weaverville Mayor Reese Lasher.

Again, improving the town's water supply and delivery system was among the top issues discussed by the council, Lasher said.

Gary McGill, engineer for the town, updated newly council members on Weaverville's well-known water sup-

ply problems and the steps that have already been taken to help solve those problems.

The town, for the past several years, has been unable to provide water to potential customers outside the corporate limits. During periods of drought the past two summers, Weaverville officials have been forced to purchase some water from the Asheville-Buncombe Water Authority.

Earlier this year, town officials signed an agreement with the Asheville-Buncombe Water Authority

enabling Weaverville to purchase water from the authority until a new source of water can be located.

One possible source that has been looked at is the Ivy River. The towns of Weaverville, Mars Hill and Woodfin have participated in a joint study to determine the cost of tapping the Ivy River as a source of water for all three towns.

Preliminary studies indicated the cost of the project would be an estimated \$10.5 million.

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## Venezuelan Man Charged With Rape

From Staff Reports

The Madison County Sheriff's Department has charged a native of Venezuela now living in Madison County with raping a 79-year old Walnut woman last week.

Rodolfo Lorenz of 85 School Road, Walnut, has been charged with second-degree rape, accord-

ing to a warrant filed in the Madison County Courthouse.

Lorenz, 47, was arrested last Thursday by the Madison County Sheriff's Department, said Chief Deputy Dal Peek.

The alleged rape occurred Thursday morning at the victim's home in Walnut, Peek said.

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## County Workers Get 4-Day Christmas Break

From Staff Reports

Most county employees will enjoy a four-day Christmas holiday break next week, courtesy of the Madison County Board of Commissioners.

The commissioners unanimously agreed last month to give county workers two additional days of paid holiday time during Christmas week.

The two extra days off are designed to make up for the raise that most county employees didn't get this year because of budget constraints, said Robert Capps, chairman of the Madison County Board of Commissioners.

And that means that most county offices will be closed Tuesday through Friday of next week, said Ralph Rice, Madison County finance officer.

"Of course, essential services such as ambulances, sheriff and landfill just can't close down," Rice said.

Employees in those departments will be receiving other days off, he said.

"We're just leaving that up to the department heads and letting them work it out among themselves," Rice said.

"Since the county didn't give its people a raise and since insurance costs went up, this is a way of saying, 'Thanks for hanging in there during the budget crunch,'" he said.

County officials say they don't anticipate any problems with

ing county offices for four days.

But some users of at least one county service feel otherwise. The News Record has received telephone calls this week from working parents who make use of the Madison County day care centers.

"What are we supposed to do with our kids?" asked one woman, who would not reveal her name. "We don't have all those extra days off. We have to either hire a sitter or take off from work without pay, and I can't really afford to do either."

Luanne Roberts, director of the Madison County Day Care Program, said that three of the county's four day care centers will be closed for three days next week.

"The centers will be open Tuesday, Dec. 22, even though the other county offices will be closed," Roberts said.

Buses will not be running on that day, but centers in Mars Hill, Marshall and Greater Ivy will be open so that working parents will have a place for their children to stay, Roberts said.

The Hot Springs Day Care Center does not serve any children of working parents, and will be closed from Tuesday through Friday, she said.

If Madison County residents have any questions about next week's closures, they should call or go to their offices in the county.



BILL STUDENC PHOTO

## It's In The Bag

Marshall town employee Dave Wilson takes time every Christmas season to don a Santa Claus suit and walk up and down Main Street, handing out candy to passers-by. Above, Anthony Spruill, 4, accepts an early Christmas gift.

## I Swear . . .

### Marshall Mayor, Aldermen Take Oaths Of Office

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

There sure was a lot of swearing going on at Monday's meeting of the Marshall Board of Aldermen.

First, Madison County Clerk of Court James Cody swore in Anita Ward for her second term as mayor of Marshall.

Cody then swore in newly elected aldermen Iverson Bradley and Jackie Davis.

He also swore in Bradley, the top vote-getter in November's balloting for Marshall aldermen, as mayor pro tem and town board clerk.

There would have been even more swearing, but Alderman Ed "Doc"

Niles, the only incumbent aldermen re-elected by Marshall voters, was not present at Monday's meeting. Cody told Ward that she could administer the oath of office to Niles at a later meeting.

After all the swearing, the Marshall Board of Aldermen held a brief meeting, most of which was spent on organizational matters for the new board.

The aldermen divided up supervisory responsibility for various town departments.

Davis, a former alderman who returns to the board after a four-year absence, will be over the Marshall

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## Hot Springs Reduces Maintenance Crew Hours

From Staff Reports

The Hot Springs Board, during a special called meeting Monday afternoon, approved some drastic cutbacks in the town's maintenance department.

The cutbacks were necessary because the town maintenance department is currently overbudget, Hot Springs Mayor Kenny Ramsey said.

Hot Springs has three maintenance employees -- one who works 40 hours a week and two who work 20 hours a week.

The town board has not been back to 20 hours a week for some time, but workers and equipment are not

Those new hours will take effect Jan. 1, Ramsey said.

"This is something we do every year, cutting back in the maintenance department during the winter months," he said. "Starting the first of April, they start getting more hours again."

Also during Monday's meeting, town board members met with Larry Johnson, head of the maintenance department, and Marshall Mayor, head of the water department, to discuss the situation of winter job opportunities in the county.

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