

Peers work to solve problems  
See page 10



Merry Christmas  
from The News-Journal



The News-Journal will be closed Wednesday, Dec. 25, Thursday, Dec. 26 and Wednesday, Jan. 1



Merry Christmas!

# The News-Journal

'If it happened, it's news to us'

No. 38 Vol. 88

HOKE COUNTY 50 CENTS

Wednesday, December 25, 1996

## Lumberton man killed

By Nicole Gabriel  
Staff writer

**A** Lumberton man was shot to death in his car and two others were wounded in Antioch early Saturday morning according to Sheriff's reports.

According to Chief Deputy Wayne Gardner, Travis Cooper, 19, of Lumberton was shot in the torso and killed about 4:30 a.m. Saturday morning after he and four others left the Ballfield nightclub in Antioch.

Cooper was a junior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he was studying pharmacology. A dean's list

student, he graduated from Lumberton High School.

Two others in the car were wounded, Gardner said. Gary McDougald, 20, of Caple Street in Lumberton and Gerard McRae, 19, of Baxter Street were treated at Moore Regional Hospital in Pinehurst after being shot in their arms. Two other men in the car were not injured.

According to Gardner, Cooper and the others left the nightclub, drove off in his Honda and were apparently lost when a suspect or suspects in another car drove up next to Cooper's car and fired shots into it.

His friends tried to give him (See MURDER, page 14)

## Judge delays motion decision

### Ferguson back in court

By Nicole Gabriel  
Staff writer

After heated debate during a pretrial hearing, a superior court judge postponed ruling on the defense's request to obtain medical records of a victim of a shooting incident involving a Raeford man.

Rodriguez Ferguson, a

Raeford man charged with five counts of murder and one count of assault with a deadly weapon with intent to inflict serious injury, appeared in court last Wednesday with his defense attorney, Henderson Hill.

Ferguson is charged with killing Jamie Hunter, 39; his wife, Debbie Hunter, 37; Tim Powell, 20; and Steve Locklear, 18; at the Puppy Creek Family Fun Arcade on New Year's Eve, 1994, and with killing James (See TRIAL, page 10)

## Board selects firms

### Takes first step in building schools

By Kristin Guthrie  
Staff writer

Last Thursday evening, the Hoke County Board of Education met in a special session to interview and select architect firms to renovate the county's present schools and build a new elementary school.

Over the next several years, the board plans to spend almost \$21.5 million dollars they were recently granted through a bond referendum during the Novem-

ber election.

Five North Carolina architect firms were interviewed and three were awarded commitments for Hoke County work in the next few years. Among those interviewed were Boney Architects of Wilmington; Hayes & Howell of Southern Pines; Shuller, Ferris, Johnson & Lindstrom of Fayetteville; Stogner & Kanoy of Rockingham and LEV of Fayetteville.

The board selected Shuller, Ferris, Johnson & Lindstrom to take responsibility for designing and constructing the elementary school. "The need is in the east- (See SCHOOL, page 14)



## Holiday scenes

Christmas scenes adorn Raeford as the holiday approaches closer, showing everyone's anticipation for the holiday. Houses and trees glow with bright Christmas lights while lawns are decorated with brightly colored Santas and nativity scenes.

Inside the homes of Raeford are lovely decorations as well. Pictured above are pictures from the home of the Rev. David Dummon. To the left, is another holiday decoration. (Photo by Kristin Guthrie)

## Around Town

By Sam C. Morris  
Contributing editor

Winter came in officially December 21 and it came in as winter should with cold weather. For the past few days, we have had the coldest weather of the year. The lows have been in the teens or low 20s and the highs have been in the 40s. Last Thursday night, we had a cold rain but in Southern Pines they had snow that was still on the ground Friday morning.

The forecast for Christmas Day is for the high to be in the 40s and the low in the 30s. Thurs-

day and Friday will see the temperatures rise and the highs will be in the 50s and the lows in the high 20s or low 30s.

I don't believe that we will have a white Christmas!

In the Raeford Presbyterian Church newsletter recently was an item that read "You are cordially invited to a Christmas Open House at the home of Ernest and Jere Frame, 1004 N. Fulton St. on December 18, 1996 from 2:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m." Later the item was corrected to senior citizens over 50 years of age. (See AROUND, page 8)

## County loses funds in computer crash

By Nicole Gabriel  
Staff writer

A combination of a computer crash and a billing program change for the Hoke County Emergency Medical Service caused a loss of more than \$500,000 worth of unpaid bills in June 1995. Despite the loss, the ambulance department still collected more money that year than ever before, according to the county manager.

Although the county-run ambulance department accumulated \$584,140 worth of outstanding bills when its billing computer

hard drive crashed in June 1995, according to financial statements, the county went on to collect over \$147,000 in revenues for fiscal year 1996.

Mike Wood said the exact amount in billing lost as a result of the computer glitch could not be determined. The actual portion of bills lost covered a six-month billing period.

However, according to Melissa Pittman, the billing system data entry clerk, after the system crashed, the county purchased an upgraded billing program which was incompatible with the back up disks she made. She was

directed to start entering billing data as of July 1, the beginning of fiscal year 1996.

The combination of these two factors resulted in the loss of the \$584,140 in unpaid bills accumulated until that point, according to Pittman.

Wood, who was previously unaware of any back up disks for the lost data, said the crash was nobody's fault. He said Pittman properly backed up the system and she could not have done anything more.

"The data entry personnel were doing everything they (See COMPUTER, page 4)

### THIS WEEK

- Calendar ..... 6
- Classifieds ..... 13
- Deaths ..... 11
- Editorials ..... 2
- Legals ..... 12
- Social News ..... 7
- School News ..... 5