

# The News-Journal

Serving Hoke County for 88 years

No. 33 Vol. 89

50 cents

Wednesday, November 19, 1997

## In

'No Wake Zone'

supported

9A

Business  
of the week

5A

Joint planning  
board gets the nod

5A

## In

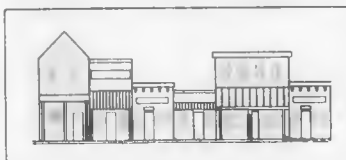
Home  
and health news

1B

## Index

Accent .....	1B
Calendar .....	2B
Classifieds .....	9B
Deaths .....	8A
Editorials .....	2A
Legals .....	8B
Socials .....	3B
TV Listings .....	6B
Weather .....	3A

## Around Town



By SAM MORRIS  
Contributing Editor

The cold weather arrived over the weekend. Monday morning my thermometer registered 30 degrees. It is supposed to be in the low 30s again on Tuesday night. The sun came out and the temperatures rose into the 40s by midday. There was also frost in many places.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs to be in the 50s and the lows in the 30s. There is a chance of rain on Wednesday. \*\*\*\*\*

If you haven't made a donation to the "Share Your Christmas" project, now is a good time to do so. This project is sponsored each year by the staff and volunteers of the H.E.L.P. organization.

They supply food, toys and other items for the needy of the county at Christmas.

You can mail your donation to "Share Your Christmas", P.O. Box 1038, Raeford, N.C., 28376 or drop it off at the H.E.L.P. office on Main Street.

(See AROUND, page 11A)

## Donations, volunteers needed for Hoke Thanksgiving project

By KNIGHT CHAMBERLAIN  
Interim editor

Nettie McDuffie, a longtime Hoke County resident and friend of the less fortunate, is again planning to prepare Thanksgiving dinner for those in Hoke County who otherwise might go without, but she needs your help.

In past years she has had all her food, plates, cups, containers lined up and ready to go, but due to unforeseen circumstances, she has barely started and Thanksgiving is only eight days away.

As a result, *The News-Journal* is making this front-page appeal on her behalf. Individuals and businesses are asked to bring financial donations to the Hoke Emergency Liaison Program (H.E.L.P.) store on 120 Main Street in downtown

Raeford, so that Nettie can go out and buy the supplies she needs to feed at least 250 people and possibly as many as 400 or more. Make checks payable to H.E.L.P. and mark them for the 1997 Thanksgiving Feast Fund. No donation is too small.

H.E.L.P. will also supply a sign-up sheet for names and phone numbers of volunteers willing to assist with the preparation and distribution of the food. Any help offered will be appreciated and is sure to make Thanksgiving more meaningful for those who participate. Call H.E.L.P. at 875-8857 to get your name and number on the sign-up sheet.

We at *The News-Journal* thank you, our readers, in advance for the cooperation and support we know you are capable of offering.

## Rising costs threaten school lunch program

By KRISTIN GUTHRIE  
Staff writer

A combined \$121,000 plus deficit in the school system's child nutrition program over the past two school years now leads the Board of Education to closely monitor the program with several options in mind for change in the near future.

By March, the Board plans to make a decision on how to deal with the shortages reported during the last two school years. The discussions now on the table include raising prices at the high school and two middle schools, increasing prices on the a la carte menu and charging a portion of

the elementary school children.

Hoke County already implemented a price increase on the a la carte menu for adult school lunches from \$1.50 per plate charge last year to a per serving charge this year in an effort to make up for the \$93,320 loss reported from last year, but the question is whether increasing prices in that arena alone will be enough.

Assuming that an a la carte price increase does not cover the financial shortage, the Board may choose one option or a combination of a few. Regardless of the outcome, Child Nutrition Director Wanda McPhaul said, "My

(See LUNCH, page 11A)



Nicole Gabriel/News-Journal

The emu, though usually docile, can wield a painful kick when frightened.

## Big bird's 'flight' ends in capture at business

By PAT WILSON  
Staff Writer

Some youngsters at Jones Day Care must have thought Big Bird had stepped right out of "Sesame Street."

There he was, running down the street "while the children cheered him on," according to Detective Greg Thomas of the

Raeford Police Department.

The big bird — an emu, to be exact — was spotted at West Hoke Middle School and at Turlington Park on Highway 211 last Wednesday afternoon. There were sightings at David's #8 Shell Station, Autumn Care Rest Home and North Main Street and Scotland, Jones and Robinson av-

(See EMU, page 11A)



Kristin Guthrie/News-Journal

## No serious injuries

An accident early Monday morning injured a Hoke County bus driver's wrist and sent two women to the hospital to be checked, but no serious injuries were reported. The accident occurred when George Hartgrove reportedly was blinded by the sun while driving toward Raeford on Aberdeen Road and drifted left of center, side-swiping a school bus carrying approximately 15 children, and a Chevrolet Beretta.

## Child custody mediation comes to Hoke court system

By NICOLE GABRIEL  
Correspondent

A new mandatory court mediation program in Hoke County keeps children out of divorce court and out of the middle.

Child custody mediation — already established in Cumberland County and other large cities throughout the state — recently came to Hoke County with the help of Chief District Court Judge Warren Pate.

Pate said he always wanted Hoke County to get the program since its inception in 1987, but never found a way to bring it here until now.

With the help of child custody mediator Bill Mitchell, a mediator in Cumberland County, Pate said, Hoke County now has the means to let parents battle out the legal issues of their divorce outside the courtroom, while preventing their children from being caught in the middle.

"I can honestly say of all the cases I have to try, custody cases are by far the hardest," Pate said. "So often, children are caught in the middle. This takes the kids out of the courtroom and I think it really prevents them from being put in the middle."

As parents vent their anger

and frustrations with each other throughout the divorce proceedings, Pate said, the children often feel put in a situation where they must choose between one parent or the other.

Child custody mediation tries to eliminate that stress for the child as much as possible, Pate said.

"The premise is to reduce the acrimony between the parents," Mitchell said. "When they do that the communication becomes better and the kids benefit from that."

After receiving an orientation to the program, parents meet with Mitchell or another mediator to hash out the details of custody and visitation, Mitchell said.

Parents receive information about step parenting, custody changes and other issues, in addition to discussing custody and visitation arrangements, Mitchell said.

The mediator does not take the place of a lawyer and cannot give legal advice or discuss alimony, child support or other monetary issues, but the mediation process provides a forum for parents to discuss the issues or even vent their anger and frustrations. Quite often, Mitchell said, the mediation helps the parents

as much as it helps the children.

"You have to let them vent," Mitchell said. That's often why they come to court to begin with."

Pate said mediation allows the parents to "let it all hang out" and work through the difficult issues, which in turn fosters a less hostile atmosphere to work through the other issues.

"Many times the most controversial issue is custody," Pate said. "When this issue is settled it makes the other issues easier to settle."

Not all mediations end successfully, Mitchell said. Sometimes the parents work through and verbally agree to a plan during mediation, but then refuse to sign the agreement in court. When that happens, the case returns to the court system.

While the mediation process often contributes to speeding up the court proceedings, the focus of custody mediation is not to lighten the court system's load, Pate said, but, instead, to serve the best interest of the children.

"This is not so much to save the court time," Pate said. "The focus is to do what's in the best interest of the kids. To keep them out of the court process. To lessen the impact on the whole family when they go through a divorce."

## Ferguson case goes to jury

By KNIGHT CHAMBERLAIN  
Interim editor

Jurors in the Rodriguez Ferguson murder trial heard final arguments Tuesday from the defense and prosecution and are expected to begin deliberating the charges against him this morning after Judge D. Jack Hooks instructs them on the law.

District Attorney Jean Powell and Assistant District Attorney Kristy Newton reviewed the evidence with the nine-woman, three-man panel and urged its members to find Ferguson, 20, guilty of first-degree murder for allegedly killing Jamie Hunter, 39, Deborah Hunter, 37, Steve

Locklear, 18, and Tim Powell, 20, at the Puppy Creek Game Room on New Year's Eve 1994.

He is also accused of shooting the Hunter's daughter, Mary Ann Hunter, 15, who survived, but was left paralyzed and in a wheelchair.

Ferguson is also accused of shooting and killing another victim — James Morrison Jr., 31, — a few hours later at the former Zodiac Lounge.

Ferguson's lawyers Henderson Hill and Lisa Dubs countered that the state failed to



Ferguson

prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt despite former Sheriff's Det. Bob Conerly's testimony earlier in the trial.

His testimony, concerning a sworn statement he took from Ferguson the day after the shootings, was that Ferguson confessed to shooting the victims.

Hill and Dubs made repeated attempts to block the statement during the trial, but to no avail.

Conerly said in his testimony that Ferguson made verbal statements to him that Ferguson shot the victims after Conerly took a sworn written statement from Ferguson.

(See FERGUSON, page 11A)