

# The News-Journal

Remember!  
Set your clock ahead  
one hour before bed  
Saturday!

If it happened, it's news to us

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## This week



Rockfish-Hoke bids  
goodbye to  
its principal  
page 6B

Scholarship  
established in honor  
of Dr. Townsend  
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## Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS  
Contributing Editor

The weather has been nice for the past week. The dogwood trees and the azalea bushes are in bloom and the grass has started to get green again. This time of the year most of the porches and automobiles are covered with pollen. You can wash it away one day and it is back again the next morning. We had a trace of rain Saturday night, but it wasn't enough to remove the pollen from the trees.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for highs Wednesday to be in the 60s and the lows in the 40s. Thursday the highs will be in the 60s and the lows in the 50s.

Friday and Saturday the highs will be in the 70s and the lows in the 50s. There is a chance of rain on Thursday.

If you are going to vote in the May primary you must be registered. If you are not registered, the last day to register is Friday, April 7, before 5 p.m.

The last day to request absentee ballots by mail is Thursday, April 25.

If you want to vote by one-step absentee, you must do so by Friday, April 28.

The date of the May primary is Tuesday, May 2. The polls will be open at 6:30 a.m. and will close at 7:30 p.m. So mark your calendar for this day and then go to the polls (See AROUND, page 9A)

## Schools want 19 percent budget increase

By KRISTIN GUTHRIE  
Staff writer

In a preliminary budget presented to the Hoke Board of Education earlier this month, the

schools are requesting \$504,714 from the county. This 19 percent increase over last year's request is earmarked for recruiting and keeping teachers, according to Finance Officer Carolyn

Olivarez.

In her executive summary to the board, Olivarez said, "We anticipate continual increases in the number of students to be served and have used the same

statistical analysis program used last year to analyze the number of students served each year since 1991 and to project a growth rate. Per this analysis our projected number of students for

2000/2001 is 6,726. However, we have chosen to use last year's membership of 6,336 for revenue calculations."

Although the proposed FY (See BUDGET, page 10A)



Dignitaries gather at the dedication of the future Sandhills Community College Hoke Center in Raeford on Monday. (Photo contributed by Laura Davenport)

## Sandhills breaks ground for Hoke center

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

President John Dempsey of Sandhills Community College welcomed county officials and college dignitaries on Monday to the "greatest day for Sandhills Community College, the City of Raeford and education in this part of the state." A flock of special guests gathered for the groundbreaking ceremony of the new

satellite campus, Sandhills Community College Hoke Center.

"There's 100 cars here, one tent and six shovels," Dempsey said on a humorous note. "People driving by probably think we're going to a hanging," he said.

"But this is a new beginning for Sandhills Community College and Hoke County as we dedicate this center," he said. "This is the reward of our future, reflecting looking forward to

our new family," he said of local supporters.

As one of the most rapidly-growing counties in North Carolina, Hoke will host the new \$1.1 million venture. SCC Hoke Center's facility will be constructed in 2000 on Hwy. 401 business in Raeford. Centrally located, this 10,000-square-foot educational center is designed on a 10-acre site, providing additional acreage for fu (See SANDHILLS, page 12A)

## Hoke man found dead in Sunday morning accident



Safety and emergency personnel at the site of a traffic fatality on McPhail Road early Sunday morning. (Photoby Cary A. Wilson)

### Third traffic fatality of year

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

Hoke County saw its third traffic fatality of the year early Sunday morning when a 28-year-old man died after he lost control of his speeding vehicle early Sunday morning.

Virgil Harris, 28, Lafayette Woods MHP, died between 1 a.m. and 6 a.m. Sunday morning on McPhail Road and was found by a passing neighbor at 6 a.m.

Rodney McNeill, also of Lafayette Woods MHP, said he was driving by when he first saw Harris' car then his (See FATALITY, page 10A)

## City picks park site for skateboards

By KEN MACDONALD  
General Manager

Raeford skateboarders will finally get the park they've been wanting—the City found a fenced-in area that will keep them away from pedestrians and drivers too.

"I'm sick of hearing there's nothing for kids to do in this town," says Raeford Recreational Director Aprille Fewel. "It won't be a big park and because of electrical hazards, we'll have to tell them to stay up near the fence, but at least this (See PARK, page 12A)



Skateboarders will get use of these grounds for free.

## Commission gives McPhatter leave with pay for degree

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Hoke Commissioners divided ranks on March 20, approving a request from County Manager Bernice McPhatter to go back to school. Commissioner Tony Hunt and Cleo Bratcher Jr., along with Commission Chairman James A. Leach, voted in favor of granting McPhatter educational leave. She will be compensated her regular salary, as well as be paid by the county for her course of study and time away. However, Commissioners Charles Daniels and L.E. McLaughlin Jr. opposed McPhatter's leave time to pursue a master's degree in public administration, uneasy that taxpayers would criticize the situation.

In a letter to the board, McPhatter said she intended to pursue her master's at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. McPhatter said she would only be taking one course in the afternoons, which would possibly be offered in Fayetteville at another cam- (See MCPHATTER, page 10A)

## 400 to return for McNeill performance

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

"When we set foot in Mary Archie McNeill's classroom, we felt like we were going to be a part of something remarkable and magical," said her former student Lester Southern, also a music teacher for 18 years. "The music she shared with us was the common ground—a golden thread that ran through us all and bound us together," Southern said of McNeill's influence on Hoke youth.

Southern, along with over 400 former students and admirers of McNeill will perform a live, stand-

"We feel so grateful to be able to laud this dynamic individual."

— Lester Southern

ing room-only tribute to McNeill at "Choral Fest 2000" on Saturday evening at Hoke County High School. McNeill, a teacher and proponent of music in the Hoke school system and Sandhills Community College for 30 years, will be honored by three decades of her students in a gala concert at 8 p.m., preceded by a banquet with plenty of prelude entertainment at 7 p.m. She is recognized for her music excellence, achieving ratings of "superior-plus" at statewide competitions with her choral groups.

"We've raised \$70,000 for 'The Mary Archie McNeill Foundation Endowment Fund,'" Southern said of the McNeill steering committee's efforts. "Thanks to the generosity of many of Mrs. McNeill's former students and other patrons of music, this money was raised to further music education opportunities for the Hoke County High School Chorus music educators," he said.

Southern, music chairman, also recognized Choral Fest founders Ralph and Linda Huff, owners of United Realty, banker Alice Glisson and Endowment Chairperson Raz Autry, who along with many others, contributed to the success of the upcoming concert and educational endowment.

Autry will present the \$70,000 endowment check, on McNeill's behalf, to School Board member Leland Strother in a ceremony, including tribute speeches and other special presentations during the sit-down banquet.

"There will be numerous surprises in store for Mary Archie and most are the best kept secrets in town," Southern said. "We feel so grateful to be able to laud this dynamic individual," he said.

"We've got people coming as far away as Washington state and Texas to sing in the 156 choral ensemble on Saturday night," he said.

The special dinner is sold out, anticipating 400 guests will attend, Southern added. Limited seating is still available for the concert, which will be transformed into an oasis motif of greenery and music memorabilia. Southern said tickets for concert seats that remain cost \$10 and may be reserved by contacting Susan Phillips at 875-4175. Arrive for the concert-only by 7:45 p.m. for admittance at the gym. Standing room only is on a first-come basis and not guaranteed.

(See MCNEILL, page 11A)



Chorale music teacher Mary Archie McNeill conducts a Hoke County High School chorus—circa 1957 in her first year in Raeford.