

# The News-Journal

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## This week



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**Squier, Autry chosen top volunteers**  
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## Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS  
Contributing Editor

The weather has been more like spring for the past week. We have had some rain, but not enough to soak the ground. Friday night and Saturday there was about a quarter of an inch of rain. It seemed that other areas got more than we did. Maybe we can look forward to seasonal weather for a while.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs Wednesday and Thursday to be in the high 70s or 80s and the lows in the 50s. Friday and Saturday the highs will be in the 80s and the lows in the 50 or 60s. The forecast doesn't call for any rain during this period.

When you read this column the primary elections will be over. I just hope that the people of the county will have gone to the polls and voted. Most of the polls are predicting only about 38 percent will vote. Let's hope Hoke County does better!

I was sorry to read about the death of Hugh A. Gardner of Shallotte. Hugh owned and operated Hugh's Texaco on Campus Avenue here for many years. After retiring he moved to Shallotte. He was buried in Laurinburg Sunday afternoon. He is survived by his wife and two daughters. Both of the daughters married men who were born and went

(See AROUND, page 9A)



Voters and candidates formed a block party to keep track of the vote tally in a traditional gathering at The News-Journal offices during the Hoke County election primary on Tuesday night (clockwise from top): Lindsay Orem and Taylor Hamilton post totals; Board of Elections Director Caroline Shook (from left), Chief Judge Ed Clanton of Stonewall Precinct and Chairman Willie McCaskill of the Elections Board verify totals at the Elections Office. (Photos by Victoriana Summers)

## Relay for Life surpasses goal

### Cancer Society event tops \$60,000 early on Saturday

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

Hoke County's third annual Relay for Life event exceeded its

goal of \$60,000 this year.

Charles Crowder, who co-chaired the event with Ricky Sandy, said Monday, "Monies will come in for probably the next two weeks. As of right now, there is \$64,001.46."

The 24-hour fund-raiser for the American Cancer Society was held at the Hoke High stadium beginning Friday at 6 p.m. and lasting throughout the night until 6 p.m. on Saturday.

Cheers rang out early Saturday afternoon when the announcement, "We just went over the hill," was made. The Rev. Tony Hunt, pastor of South Hoke Baptist

Church, had just handed over a check for more than \$3,100 from the church.

Crowder said he had heard "nothing but excellent comments."

The relay was successful "due to the good people in Hoke County," Crowder said. "As co-chair of the event, I'd like to thank everyone for their hard work."

Crowder said he had spoken with a man who said he and his family had decided to get involved with the relay then found out two weeks later his wife had cancer. "It made it more meaningful for us," Crowder said the man commented.

The event was hard work for many participants but there was fun, too, and some moving moments, particularly the first night when the relay was led by cancer survivors and later, as darkness set in, when luminaries were lit in memory of those who lost their battle with the disease as well as for those in need of prayer. The track was surrounded by

(See RELAY, page 8A)

## City tax rate may remain unchanged

By KRISTIN GUTHRIE  
Staff writer

During a detailed budget workshop session Monday evening, City Manager Mike McNeill led city council members through the specifics of the proposed 2000/2001 budget. Per-

haps the most significant outcome of the proposed upcoming budget showed no increase in the current \$.47 per \$100 valuation tax rate. McNeill's budget summary also stated that the budget would allow the city to maintain a 40 percent fund balance in the general fund and 100-plus per-

cent fund balance in the water/sewer fund.

Further, the budget showed that the city plans to maintain current water and sewer rates and maintain current service rates with some insignificant fee increases, while still providing a

(See TAX RATE, page 8A)

## Bids secured on county offices complex

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Bids for the future Hoke County Administrative Facility were submitted to Boney Architects and Hoke Building Director Dennis Baxley last week, and the matter was placed on the consent agenda to be approved by county commissioners Monday evening as a routine item.

However, Commissioner L.E. McLaughlin questioned why the board should approve bids when financing for the project is still uncertain.

Subsequently, the consent agenda item was held, awaiting a decision later on by the commissioners on selecting bids.

"Financing hasn't been secured on this particular project yet," County Manager Bernice

McPhatter said.

However, in a positive letter to Baxley from Boney Architects, project architectural firm, architect W. Elliott O'Neal Jr. indicated bid figures were successfully within the range of the budget established by the county. Boney recommended awarding contracts to the low bidders, totaling all construction contracts

(See BIDS, page 8A)

## Newton victor in close race

Defeats Southerland, McRae for D.A.

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

It's not official yet, but Kristy McMillan Newton garnered the most votes in Hoke and Scotland counties to become the Democratic nominee for district attorney for District 16A, which encompasses both counties.

Last night's vote tally indicated a close race with Newton defeating Harry Southerland, a Hoke County opponent, by 135

votes. Both defeated a third contender, W. Philip McRae, of Scotland County.

The Democratic nominee faces no Republican opposition in November's general election.

"The only thing I want to say is thank you very much to all my supporters in Scotland and Hoke counties who worked for me," said the 28-year-old senior district attorney, who has served for five years under current DA Jean

(See DA, page 7A)

## Wright, Leach, Blue, Knott head for showdown

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

In a fast-paced May 2 primary that Director Caroline Shook of the Board of Elections described as "smooth," Democrats James A. Leach, incumbent, and Robert A. "Bobby" Wright won bids for two commissioners' seats available in the upcoming November election. For the first time in Hoke County's history, two Republican commissioner candidates, Buddy Blue and Jim Knott, who edged out party opponent Kevin Epps, will also compete in the election for the

same available positions. "This was a tough race," Blue said. Knott expressed disappointment more Democrats and Republicans didn't turn out to vote.

Topping the voters' choice, Wright, a Hoke farmer for 36 years and lifelong resident of Hoke, carried 51 percent of the vote in the commissioner's race. Wright garnered 1,971 votes on the Democrat ticket. Leach, current commission chairman and senior pastor of Love Church, placed second on the roster, earning 1,883 votes, which was 48.6 percent of the vote. Leach is seeking

(See COMMISSION, page 7A)

## House burns, was origin of furniture business

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

The wood frame house was old when John Luther Wood bought it sometime during the depression, and there is no way to say exactly the age of the old home on Sanders Road was when it burned to the ground Thursday evening.

Firefighters called to the scene at about 7:30 p.m. Thursday reported flames had already overtaken about half the house. They worked to keep the fire under control and prevent it from spreading into nearby woods, and then they knocked down the chimneys which would have posed a safety hazard.

(See HOUSE BURNS, page 8A)



West Hoke volunteer firefighters apply water to control a blaze that destroyed an old home on Sanders Road. (Photo by Cary A. Wilson)