

# The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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## This week

Woman sentenced  
for letting dog starve  
page 7A

Columnist  
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'Big Mama'  
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## To our readers:

Because of a press breakdown Wednesday morning, last week's edition of *The News-Journal* was printed four hours late. That meant the papers weren't available around town until the next morning, and also were delivered late to the post office for mailing to subscribers. We appreciate your understanding, and the help of the Raeford Post Office and *The Pilot* in Southern Pines, which came to our aid and printed the paper.

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## Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS  
Contributing Editor

The weather for the past week has felt more like summer than spring. The temperatures have been in the 90s and even with the breeze it is hot. It is unusual for me to turn on the air conditioner this early. Sunday it was reported that many areas of the county had readings of over 100 degrees. The lows have been in the 60s here, but Washington, D.C. had a low of 72 degrees Sunday night. It is also dry and the outlook for rain is slim.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs to be in the low 90s or high 80s and the lows in the 60s. There is a chance of rain on Wednesday.

I was happy at the outcome of the primary voting in Hoke County. But it was sad the number of people that went to the polls. When 25 percent of the people can say who will run our county and court system, then the majority of the people don't care what happens. There must be a reason for people not to care. Could it be times are too good? Times can change, as history has shown.

The 53rd annual meeting of the Raeford Hoke Chamber of Commerce will be held Tuesday, May 16, at 6:30 pm at West Hoke Middle School. The affair will be sponsored by FirstHealth of the Carolinas (See *AROUND*, page 5A)

## Tyler named schools superintendent

By KRISTIN GUTHRIE  
Staff writer

The Hoke County Board of Education announced last night that Mitchell Tyler will become the new school superintendent

as of July 1. Tyler, currently the assistant superintendent of the Cumberland County School System in charge of instructional services, was the board's unanimous choice from a pool of 11 candidates.

"We had several applications. Several who could have fit the bill .... He (Tyler) was a unanimous choice," Hoke County Board of Education Chairman John McAllister said. "We just narrowed the applicants and

picked the best choice."

Tyler said he also thinks that moving back to Hoke County is a great move for him. "I'm returning home," he said.

Tyler, actually a Robeson County native, has spent much

of his educational career in Hoke County already, and said he really looks forward to returning to familiar "stomping grounds" where he can get back in touch with "a great school system." (See *SCHOOLS*, page 8A)



I come from Rockfish — not the Ponderosa!

Enjoying a wagon ride on the Rockfish Road trail Tuesday are (left to right) Phil Massengill, Charles Gasque, Asley Grissom and Bobby Posey. Providing the pulling power are Dixie and Belle. (Photo by Victoriana Summers)

## News-Journal sues county

Alleges records were denied

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

The *News-Journal* filed a civil lawsuit against Hoke County in Raeford on May 9 seeking disclosure of public records available under the N.C. Public Records Law.

The newspaper filed a complaint with the clerk of superior court yesterday alleging it had been repeatedly denied salary information regarding County Manager Bernice McPhatter and Personnel Director Shirley Rush.

Several hours after the complaint was filed, the newspaper received a fax from the office of County Attorney Neil Yarborough containing the information.

The legal proceeding is continuing, with the newspaper seeking an immediate hearing, an opportunity to copy and inspect the public records, and payment of fees for attorneys representing the paper.

County Manager Bernice McPhatter, also interim finance director, and Personnel Director-Deputy Fi-

(See *SALARIES*, page 8A)

## Southerland asks for recount, seeks new election

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Harry Southerland, who was defeated last week in his bid for district attorney, is requesting a recount of votes. Willie McCaskill, chairman of Hoke's board of elections, and Judy Riggins, director of Scotland County's board of Elections, con-

firmed the request. Southerland sent his written request to the boards on May 3.

In a separate complaint on May 5, Southerland requested a new district attorney's selection be held and a "full investigation" called due to some alleged misconduct by election officials at the polls.

This protest by Southerland and three voters who complained

was unanimously denied by the board at its May 9 meeting due to failure to comply with legal procedures. County Attorney Neil Yarborough said state regulations require notarization and verification of the "complainant," along with specification of the name of the person whom the complaint is about.

However, recount consider-

ation is still pending by the state board of elections. Kristy McMillan Newton, senior assistant district attorney for Scotland and Hoke counties, was unofficially declared victor in the DA race. Laurinburg attorney W. Philip McCrae also lost out to Newton.

Neither Newton nor Southerland returned calls to

comment regarding a potential recount.

According to both boards, voting canvases were conducted on Friday to verify accuracy of the election results, which were forwarded to the state board of elections for final certification.

"There were no problems," Director Caroline Shook of (See *RECOUNT*, page 7A)

## Forest Creek residents stuck in dispute over rutted roads

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

A group of more than 30 citizens from Forest Creek Acres, located off Turnpike Road, packed the May 1 commissioners' meeting to address concerns about poor road conditions. They thanked the board for supporting a petition to request the N.C. Dept. of Transportation pave Lemont Drive, a primary road in their subdivision.

"It's disgraceful," said Commission Chairman James A. Leach of the inferior road conditions endured by Forest Creek families.

Forest Creek residents also criticized the alleged lack of road upkeep by developer-realtor Tommy Wright, who inherited the property from his

father, the late Julian H. Wright.

Commissioner Cleo Bratcher Jr. echoed Leach's sentiments, saying, "This is a problem with landowners not keeping up their end of an agreement and it's a crying shame."

When contacted on Monday, Wright said the commissioners weren't accurately informed; he is no longer responsible for road maintenance at Forest Creek. Wright, who still sells parcels of land at Forest Creek, said he is trying to resolve any misunderstanding in order to be "fair and ethical."

"I think there are some concerns, but part of it is unfounded," Wright said. "I certainly feel for the people. But, if they had bought on a paved road, they would have paid a higher (See *ROADS*, page 8A)



Forest Creek landowner Leatrice McMillian points to ruts in the roads on Lemont Drive, which she hopes the N.C. Department of Transportation will soon pave. (Photo by Victoriana Summers)

## County exceeds census goal, begins phase of followups

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Hoke County is responding beyond expectations to Census 2000 inquiries, says Elizabeth Jacobs, a partnership specialist from the Regional Census Center. Jacobs and Census Supervisor Angela Philips toured the county last Thursday, congratulating folks for contributing to the census' success.

"We were trying to get a 54 percent response rate in Hoke County," Jacobs said. "But, we've surpassed our target rate and received 56 percent out of Hoke."

"As a whole, Hoke has successfully reached its goal," she said.

Jacobs said the City of Raeford is nearing its target of 65 percent, with only one percent left to attain its goal. Both Jacobs and Philips are overseeing operations in (See *CENSUS*, page 8A)



Angela Philips, operations supervisor, and Elizabeth Jacobs, partnership specialist, are coordinating final efforts for the Regional Census Center. (Photo by Victoriana Summers)

## Crull announces for sheriff

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Robert Wayne Crull, 42, a patrol sergeant at the Raeford Police Department and retired U.S. Army veteran of 22 years, has announced his candidacy in the 2002 Hoke County Sheriff's race. He said his goals include bringing ethics and fairness to the Sheriff's Department, helping the youth of Hoke and preventing crime.

"The people in Hoke County deserve more experienced law enforcement so they can be better served," Crull said.

"If I'm elected Sheriff, all deputies who work at the Sheriff's Department will have the option to be sworn in again under my administration as deputies," he said.

(See *CANDIDATE*, page 10A)

