

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

No. 41 Vol. 93

50 cents

Wednesday, January 10, 2001

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Around Town



BY SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

As I write this column Monday morning, it is raining. The rain is supposed to hang around until Tuesday. I usually don't complain about the cold weather, but now I am looking forward to spring. My heating system stopped last week and we spent one night with part of the house shut off and kept warm with gas logs and an electric heater. Sunday morning I taught Sunday School at the Raeford Presbyterian Church and the heat was also out at the church. I didn't brave the morning worship service, but many did stay for the service. This is why I am looking forward to spring.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the high Wednesday to be in the 50s and the low in the 20s. For the remainder of the week the highs will be in the high 50s and lows in the 40s. There could be a shower on Thursday and Friday.

Last week Harold Gillis came by the office and he had a copy of The News & Observer. In the obituaries was the death of Mrs. Mary Faust Plonk Weaver of Greensboro. She will be remembered by many in Raeford, as she taught school here in the late 1930s. She and several other teachers at that time stayed in the home of Mrs. W. T. Covington on West Donaldson Avenue. A (See AROUND, page 8A)

Survey: demands on schools increasing

BY KRISTIN GUTHRIE
Staff writer

The Masonboro Group, a Wilmington consulting firm, presented its strategic planning report for Hoke County's schools to the board of education last night after a survey of parents, educators and others of the community was conducted. Questionnaires were sent out in November following two public forums held earlier in the year.

After studying the survey results, the Masonboro

Group concluded in their report: "Review of selected population and economic variables indicates a county definitely in transition during the next two decades."

The study showed a doubling of the total population between 1980 and 2025. Gradual growth was projected in groups from birth to 19 years of age reflecting "... future increasing demands and expenditures increases associated with personnel, facilities, utilities, transportation and other facets of school district operation," the report stated.

While population growth was about 10,000 from the

years 2000 to 2025, employment increases during this same period showed a growth rate of less than 3,000, the report indicated.

The predicted population growth will result in a corresponding growth projection in retail sales, the group indicated. Their report stated that increases in retail sales may also indicate an increase in household earnings. They also predict that households earning less than \$29,999 annually will decrease and those incomes of \$30,000 and higher will increase slowly.

(See SCHOOLS, page 8A)

Hoke citizens respond to family

Infant to undergo surgery Feb. 6

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Three kings of the Orient did not arrive at the Craig's home during Christmas bearing frankincense and myrrh for their seven-month-old daughter, Brianna. However, Heather Craig said it "seemed that way" after "total strangers" knocked on their door during the holidays, bringing gifts and donations for her chronically ill daughter.

Toys overflowed the living room bought by "Hoke guardian angels" and others for Brianna and her four-year-old brother, Tyler. Barrels of Hoke sweet potatoes and corn, bags of peas and country barbecue were donated by farmers. Money contributions exceeded \$4,000 for an upcoming, out-of-state trip for surgery and any follow-up visits, and it took "more than three hours" to open the presents, Mrs. Craig said.

"After learning about our financial dilemma and Brianna's illness, farmers, police officers, military retirees, homemakers, business owners, church and civic groups poured out their hearts to a child they did not even know, and dipped into their pockets," said an emotional Mrs. Craig. "Thanks to them, Brianna was able to have Santa Claus come. This is a Christmas to remember forever — no matter what happens."

Brianna was briefly treated for high fevers just prior to Christmas Eve. This week, an energetic Brianna is attempting to walk, and experiencing some pain as she cuts her first two teeth, Mrs. Craig added.

Brianna suffers from severe renal reflex, a condition that poisons her kidneys with bacteria. Her mother said Brianna was born with one withered kidney operating at 33 percent capacity, and the other functions at about 65 percent. The infant is scheduled for surgery at Walter Reed Hospital on February 6 where doctors will "re-implant" (See HOKE'S RESPONSE, page 7A)



Young Tyler Craig, his mother Heather Craig and baby sister, Brianna, experienced the best Christmas thanks to the generosity of Hoke citizens, who donated money for Brianna's upcoming surgery trip and Christmas gifts. (Photo by Victoriana Summers)

Contributors thanked for response

Heather and Brian Craig are thanking the many people who helped their baby, Brianna, who suffers from a serious kidney ailment, and also their young son Tyler.

Among the many contributors of money or gifts, were: Billy and Gene Thacker, owners of Raeford's P.K. Airport, \$500 plus an offer to organize a (See THANKED, page 7A)

Hoke hires first purchasing agent

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer



Assistant purchasing agent Camille Hurst with Mike McNeill, Hoke's first purchasing agent.

Hoke commissioners, led by Commission Chairman L.E. McLaughlin Jr., envisioned saving taxpayers money by hiring an expert to supervise county purchases last year. That vision was realized on January 2 when County Manager Bernice McPhatter announced Mike McNeill, a heavyweight in accounting and purchasing and a distinguished Native American, would be the first purchasing agent hired for Hoke.

McNeill's team will include Camille Hurst, a county employee hired two years ago, who will serve as assistant purchasing agent.

"We are in the planning stages of our new department," McPhatter said. "We are looking forward to great things from Mr. McNeill and Mrs. Hurst."

McNeill served as House of Raeford's

purchasing director for 18 years until he resigned to accept the county position. During his tenure at House of Raeford, McNeill supervised a \$14-15 million annual purchasing budget. He was also honored last year when he was appointed as the elected Hoke official to the Lumbee Tribal Government that was established.

"The future looks bright for the county," McNeill said. "I am looking forward to putting my experience to work to help the county and its citizens."

"I hope to save the county some money, and I hope my job will make the jobs of other department heads easier."

McNeill said he has been welcomed by county staff and is anticipating a "smooth transition." He is meeting with McPhatter this week to discuss programs that will be recommended for implementation.

"One of my biggest priorities will be to keep everybody within their budget," (See PURCHASING, page 6A)

Skaggs home searched

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The State Bureau of Investigation obtained a warrant last Thursday evening and searched the home and vehicles of Deborah Scaggs, wife of James Michael Scaggs, who was murdered on Thanksgiving eve, and her son, Jason Bascomb, who initially called 911 to report something wrong at the residence. The search was conducted for probable cause after an anonymous note about the murder was received by *The News-Journal* last Thursday. The note was turned over to Major Thomas Carlton at the Sheriff's Office. The search request was also approved based on statements of neighbors interviewed by the SBI that alleged there were signs Mrs. Scaggs may have been a victim of domestic violence. Scaggs also allegedly told one of the neighbors she had her own shotgun, the affidavit said.

"One of the detectives told me they had a suspect and could I come out to the house," Scaggs said about the recent search. "He said if I didn't come out, they might have to let the suspect go."

"They got me there under false pretenses. I was staying with a relative and she brought me out there."

The mystery note, addressed to the editor and having a Fayetteville postmark, was unsigned but the writer indicated knowledge of the murder. However, the SBI wrote in its affidavit it believed the document might allegedly "have been written by Scaggs in an effort to move suspicion by law enforcement from her." Also, the SBI alleged Scaggs has made an effort to establish "very publicly" through (See SEARCH, page 6A)

Widow of victim fearful killers returned to house

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Deborah Scaggs, widow of murder victim James Michael Scaggs, slain on Thanksgiving eve, said she experienced a second incident of terror after two men attempted to break into her Arabia Road home on New Year's Eve. Scaggs said they never gained entry and fled. She was unharmed, she said.

When her husband was fatally shot in November, Mrs. Scaggs was also reportedly beaten during the attack by two unidentified men, and treated at Cape Fear Valley Medical Center.

"I am afraid the two men might be the same as those who killed (See FEARFUL, page 6A)

FirstHealth Hoke EMS paramedics save patient in cardiac arrest

BY BRENDA BOUSER
Special to The News-Journal

What they had expected to be a routine transport between a Raeford physician's office and FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital became anything but routine for two Hoke EMS paramedics when their patient went into cardiac arrest. As driver Roxanne Hammerle hit the lights, siren and accelerator, her partner Rick Sousa went into his own form of overdrive and

revived 72-year-old Lucille Barton with a defibrillator's shock to the heart.

It was the second "save" of Sousa's career.

"You kind of just do it and then think about it," said Sousa. "It was like I was watching myself."

According to Sousa, Barton had gone to the FirstHealth Family Care Center in Raeford on November 18 complaining of chronic heartburn. When an EKG revealed an abnormal heart rhythm, (See PARAMEDICS, page 8A)



Rick Sousa and Roxanne Hammerle