

The News-Journal

Happy Valentine's Day

If it happened, it's news to us

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Peterkin officially begins campaign page 10A

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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

What a change in the weather! As I write this column Monday morning, it is raining. The temperature is in the low 30s and there is ice hanging from the trees. There have been many closings of schools and businesses in the western and northern part of the state. The roads are passable in the county and I haven't heard of any closings. My first thought when ice starts forming on trees is that it could cause power lines to be hurt. The cold weather is bad enough without loss of electricity.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs Wednesday, Thursday and Friday to be in the 60s and the lows will be in the 50s. Saturday the high will be in the 60s and the low in the 30s. There is a chance of rain on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

Have you purchased your ticket for the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce-sponsored Legislative Breakfast? This is an annual affair and is held at Burlington Mills Conference Room. The event this year is Saturday, February 17, beginning at 8:30 a.m. The space is limited so go by the chamber office and get your ticket.

At this affair you will get to hear from our Congressman (See AROUND, page 7A)

Board didn't know of impending audit

At least 4 federal grants on the line

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The majority of Hoke commissioners said they "are wait-

ing" to hear if an \$88,000 federal grant intended for Sheriff Jim Davis' use was mismanaged by County Manager Bernice McPhatter.

No one knew there was any problem, or there was going to be an audit, was the consensus of Commission Vice Chairman Bobby Wright, Commission Chairman L.E. McLaughlin Jr. and Commissioners Charles V.

Daniels and Tony Hunt.

"We were not advised by Mrs. McPhatter," Wright said. "If we decide to take any action about this, it will be afterwards. It is too pre-mature to discuss this now."

Since last Wednesday, the Governor's Crime Commission's auditors have been examining the county financial records. Questions regarding \$88,000 that was received for purchasing four ve-

(See AUDIT, page 6A)



Not THAT kind of H.E.L.P.!

Proprietor Bonnie Johnson shows off two female mixed-chow puppies that were dropped in a bin at the H.E.L.P. store in Raeford on Main Street over the weekend. Wet and hungry, the pair is looking for a loving home.

Board undecided on year-round calendar

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke's Board of Education remains at an "impasse" regarding whether to implement a "modified" year-round calendar or stick closer to its current year-round schedule for 2001-2002, said Hoke school superintendent Mitch Tyler today.

However, the school board voted

on Tuesday night to approve the traditional calendar for Hoke County High and Turlington schools, and to consider some modifications to the year-round calendar at the county's other nine middle and elementary schools. In favor of the motion, were Leland Strother, who broke a previous tie, Harry Southerland and Teddy Locklear. Opposed to the joint mo-

(See YEAR-ROUND, page 9A)



Coach Walter Barnhill, center, on "signing day" with Micheaux Hollingsworth, left, and Anthony McLeod. Anthony's mother, Mary McLeod, stands behind him, and Micheaux's mother, Sheila Hollingsworth, is behind him.

Players sign with A&T, Clemson

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Walter Barnhill received a nice going away present before his retirement as head football coach at Hoke County High School in May. This year, for the first time in school history, more than one of his former

football players signed scholarship contracts with colleges. Defensive end Anthony K. McLeod will be playing for North Carolina A&T University and running back Micheaux Hollingsworth signed on with Clemson University.

Hollingsworth and McLeod joined (See PLAYERS SIGN, page 8A)

Sheriff interrogates Brittany's parents

Family accuses Davis of harassment, says they were pressured to confess

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor



Charles and Connie Chavis

There is yellow tape tied around the old oak tree again in the front of young murder victim Brittany Locklear's home on Gaine Road. However, it does not symbolize hope for her safe return home as the previous yellow ribbons strung in 1998. This is crime tape that was wrapped around the mobile home last Monday by Hoke deputies to allegedly legally "keep them out" after Oakwood Homes repossessed it, said Connie Chavis, mother of Brittany. She and her husband, Charles, stepfather of Brittany, have struggled financially since the murder of their daughter



Crime tape at the Chavis home.

three years ago, and had their trailer foreclosed for \$6,000 in back payments.

Chavis said painful reminders about Brittany returned after Sheriff Jim Davis had deputies take her to his office last Tuesday for interrogation — one day after her trailer was locked



Brittany Lynn Locklear

up. She alleged Davis' questions about her daughter's murder were "totally off the wall." Charles Chavis and her father-in-law, James "Candy Rose" Stevens, were also questioned, she said.

"He accused us of everything from me having an affair with a law official, my daughter being fathered by this same man, showed terrible naked photographs of Brittany to my father-in-law and even accused him of accepting a bribe to keep quiet about who murdered my daughter," Chavis said. "He tried to get each one of us to confess to her killing. All of us told him we were not guilty."

"My daughter was loved. We gave her the best we could. This is a terrible tragedy, and no one knows how it feels to lose your (See INTERROGATION, page 10A)

Hoke Board of Commissioners carries on in chairman's absence

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

For Commission Chairman L.E. McLaughlin Jr., absence from a county commissioners' meeting is rare. However, McLaughlin has been ill since last year. His physical condition has resulted in him missing the past two meetings, and some others last year. Several commissioners are worried McLaughlin's continued absence may prevent majority votes on future, critical issues.

Since his December election as the chair for the fifth time since 1990, he promised to

bring the board to "heights of excellence." Commissioner Charles V. Daniels said he looks to McLaughlin as a "respected leader" to ease the board through any crisis.

"We just pray L.E. will get better, and be back with us soon," Daniels said. "We rely on his advice and experience. He is like a rock to this board."

"I feel like some people with their own interests at stake would like to see L.E. resign."

Daniels said he has already been approached by a former Raeford official who (See CHAIRMAN, page 9A)

Task force targets gangs in schools

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Gang violence exists at Hoke County High School, and it is "on the uprise," said Major Kevin Locklear, assistant police chief of the Raeford Police Department.

"We get weapons off of kids, and some of this may be gang-related," Locklear said. "I would not say gang violence has increased a huge amount this year, but we think there is some gang violence happening. We are trying to prevent it."

In seeking solutions, Hoke school officials, law enforcement, church and civic volunteers are pooling their resources to prevent gang activity at Hoke High and local middle schools. Dubbed by school superintendent Mitch Tyler as the "Gang Task Force," he said the "partnership" organization has been active for several months. An awareness seminar for members was held on February 13 with the Fayetteville Police Department's Gang Task Unit conducting training classes.

"This group is an outgrowth after parents (See TASK FORCE, page 10A)