

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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back this spring
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victory is first
in 10 years
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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

The weather for the past week has followed the same pattern as in previous weeks. We have warm days and then we will have cold days. One day last week the wind was like the "Lion of March." We still can't get the rain that is needed. I guess we should be thankful that we haven't had the heavy snow and tornadoes that have been in other parts of the nation. Monday morning the weather reports said there were hailstorms in some of the southern states. As I write this Monday morning it is cloudy and we could get some rain.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday calls for the highs Wednesday and Thursday to be in the 60s and the lows in the 40s or 50s. Friday and Saturday the highs will be in the 70s or 60s and the lows in the 40s. There is a chance of rain on Thursday and Friday.

I received the following letter last week and I thought it would be of interest to many readers of this column.

"Dear Sam, my mother and sisters join me in sending appreciation for your column in The News-Journal. Through it we keep up with the people we knew when we lived in Raeford.

"Mother (Sadie McLean) is now living at Sardis Nursing Home, 5151 Sardis Road, (See AROUND, page 8A)

Budget crisis forces county cutbacks

Hiring freeze, overtime ban blamed partly on loss of \$254,000 from state

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The economic squeeze is on after County Manager Bernice McPhatter presented commissioners with a plan on Monday night paring Hoke's budget by at least \$250,000 to avoid a

"domino-affect" of diminished services. Otherwise, McPhatter estimated the county could experience almost a half-million dollar shortfall because of "eroding" financial resources on the state level.

McPhatter says local cutbacks will compensate for the state

"holding money back because of deficits." For Hoke, that totaled \$254,000. The lost revenue resulted from declining retail and manufacturing firms' sales, and a Hoke school supplement required of \$193,000, she added.

"Our only other solution is to amend the budget with money

from the fund balance to be appropriated," McPhatter told the board.

However, dipping into the fund balance was not a favorable alternative, said Commission Vice Chairman Bobby Wright and Commissioner James A. Leach.

McPhatter's emergency plan imposed a hiring freeze, eliminated overtime, established a moratorium on capital outlay purchases and abolished authorizing any purchase orders from all departments as of yesterday.

However, Al Schwarzbher, (See CUTBACKS, page 8A)



Students in action

Top: West Hoke Middle School's Winterguard captured first place in competition recently and is shown performing for the school's PTO last week.

Bottom: 6th grade students Tiffany Purcell (left to right), Carmen Locklear, and Chris Graham see a helicopter from the inside after it landed at West Hoke Middle last week.

Stories about the events and others are on pages 4-6A.

Sandhills Mental Health faces consolidation despite accolades

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

An area director for the mental health center that serves Hoke County is pondering a proposed state plan to lump 350,000 clients under one county-operated program rather than keeping the mental health services independent. Receiving recent national accreditation by the Council of

Accreditation for Children and Family Services, Sandhills Center for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services was found to be 98.5 percent compliant in more than 26 of its different programs, and it was assessed on 1,100 standards.

Michael Watson, area director for Sandhills told Hoke commissioners last month his organization opposed state leg-

islation that would take management away from health professionals and place it in the hands of one county administration. He said Hoke would likely not be the headquarters selected in its region due to its smaller population. The Sandhills Center covers 210,000 clients in Moore, Hoke, Montgomery, Anson and Richmond counties, employs 325 people and operates on a \$25 million annual budget.

On Monday, commissioners supported Watson's concerns by signing a resolution seeking that supporters, consumers and families not be "disenfranchised" in the decision-making process. However, the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners favors the proposal that would control how local mental health, developmental disability and substance (See MENTAL HEALTH, page 7A)

Five Points Horse Park hosts 'Horse Trials'

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

St. Patrick's Day weekend equestrian enthusiasts from as far away as Canada and England will view riders galloping cross country, fording streams from "high ground," plunging into water jumps on "low ground," and leaping over massive obstacles at the 11th annual Southern Pines Horse Trials. Coordinator Lafreda Williams, a Sandhills Conservancy board member, said the event will be staged at the new Five Points Horse Park in western Hoke for the first time.

Befitting this Irish holiday, 280 equestrian entrants unrivaled as "the best in the world" will be running in the rye on emerald green race courses March 16, 17 and 18 at Horace Walters and Montrose Roads.

(See HORSE TRIALS, page 8A)



Left to right: Credit Union Board members Kemp Crumpler and Betty Joyce Hasty, County Manager Bernice McPhatter, City Executive Sherry Lucas, Mayor Bob Gentry, and board members Kay McMillan, Darrin McNeill and Dr. Bob Nelson.

Credit Union breaks ground

The North Carolina State Employees' Credit Union broke ground Tuesday for a 4,800 square foot building in Raeford.

The Raeford branch will move to Fulton Street and US 401 from its rented Teal Drive location where it's been in operation since 1990.

Sherry Lucas, vice-president and city executive, said the decision to build conformed to the Credit Union's policy, which is to rent a building until a branch's assets reaches \$30 million.

Lucas told a crowd gathered for the ground-breaking she hoped the building would be open in late fall.