

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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sacrifices
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Empty houses
go up in flames
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Five sentenced
for fighting
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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

We need more rain than we have received over the past week. For the past few afternoons the sky has darkened and it looked like we were in for rain. According to my rain gauge it still registers zero. As I write this column Monday morning the sky is dark and you can hear thunder in the distance. So far there hasn't been any rain, but I still have hope that it will be raining before I finish this column.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs to be in the 80s and the lows in the 60s. There could be some rain on Thursday and Friday.

In the paper last week was an article about the presentation of the new City of Raeford Seal. In the article was the following quote: "Featured a rendering of the former medical school and the Raeford Institute."

This is an error because the medical school and the Raeford Institute are two different schools.

The City of Raeford was built around the Raeford Institute many years after the medical school had closed. Since my name was mentioned in the designing of the seal, I just want to set the record straight.

Last week I wrote about a (See AROUND, page 10A)

Judge retakes control in Leandro case

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A Wake County judge snipped some red tape yesterday in a five-year legal bout to obtain more educational funding for Hoke and other low-wealth counties. Judge Howard Manning Jr. took back

control of the case in order to expedite development of a plan for corrective measures. In a previous ruling he assigned the plan to both the state and the counties filing suit, but yesterday said he believed he could move more quickly.

Manning said he will determine whether Hoke and other low-wealth coun-

ties lack the money to provide a "sound basic education" for their children or if they aren't spending the money they have properly, and he will take responsibility for devising corrective measures.

His recent order comes despite a plan announced last week by Gov. Mike Easley to set up an educational task force to study

long-term options to improve the school systems.

While Manning praised Easley's efforts, he said he will require additional, immediate hearings be held. In order to speed up the process of his previous orders, Manning said he will meet with the (See LOW-WEALTH SUIT, page 9A)



Mary Marshburn, a Gov. Morehead teacher for the visually impaired, consoles Samuel "Sammy" Sosa, a 19-month-old Hispanic child who is completely blind.

Child copes with loss of eyes

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

In a world of darkness, one-year-old Sammy Sosa, a native of Mexico, copes with the loss of his eyes. During the day, he receives therapy and plays at Children's Development Center in Raeford. His parents, Martha Cantor and Raymundo Sosa, have found a safe refuge for him while they earn a living.

Though the Raeford residents are employed, the Sosa family has no medical insurance for Sammy because he was brought to North Carolina after his birth.

The couple speaks only Spanish.

Sammy does not qualify for any type of public assistance, said Shelley Daniels, director of the local childcare center.

"Sammy's mother is very committed to her son," Daniels said. "She loves him very much and there is a tremendous bond there. This is a great adjustment for him to lose his eyesight, and not be able to understand what is going on around him."

Sammy was diagnosed with bilateral retinoblastoma — malignant tumors in both eyes — resulting in the surgical (See SAMMY, page 7A)

Doctors have spiritual approach to medicine

By SHELLEY MARTIN
Special to The News-Journal

Physicians George S. Poehlman and W. Richard Schmits Jr. share a bond that goes beyond their recent association with the FirstHealth Family Care Center in Raeford.

Both have dedicated their lives to helping people in need through what one would call a spiritual approach to family medicine. Trained as a Methodist minister, Dr. Schmits wants to reach beyond statistics and prescriptions.

Once a traveling missionary, Dr. Poehlman has reached out to rural populations inside and outside of this country.

While neither has been at the Raeford clinic for more than two months, both say they already feel the ties that bind them to Hoke County and surrounding communities growing stronger.

W. Richard Schmits, M.D.

Even as a young boy, Richard Schmits was determined to follow in the footsteps of a man he never knew.

The profession of a doctor had brought his mother's father, William Schopfer, much joy in his relatively short lifetime.

"My grandfather was a doctor," Dr. Schmits says, "but I never met him. He died before I was born. My mother said what a great person he was and how his patients loved him. He died of hepatitis when he was in his 50s, and he was like a role model to me even though I never met him. My grandfather was a good person, a good physician, and when he died, the people praised him for all the good things he did."

So the Bergen County, N.J., native set out at a tender age to become like his grandfather, aiming to give back what he could with a desire to help others. Soon after receiving an A.B. in general science from the University of Rochester, Schmits headed to Duke University to take the first step in becoming the second doctor in his family.

"I remember the first time I came from Rochester, N.Y., to Duke," he says. "It was in March, and snow was on the ground in Rochester where

Dr. John Dempsey, president of Sandhills Community College, officially announced last Thursday that SCC's new \$1.8 million Hoke Center will be dedicated in honor of two outstanding Hoke philanthropists, Mary and Wyatt Upchurch. The Hoke campus will be completed by July, Dempsey said, but opening ceremonies will not be held until September when the facility will welcome the first students.

In naming the 10,000 square foot Hoke Center after the Upchurches, the first building erected will be designated as "Upchurch Hall." Dempsey credited the Upchurches' "leadership" and other fine qualities in making the new Sandhills Community College center a reality. The

Upchurches' gift of property to build the college also served as a catalyst for SCC to move forward to meet the needs of the people of Hoke, Dempsey added.

"All of us at the college are very excited about our new facility which will allow us to expand services to the people of Hoke," Dempsey said. "We are especially grateful to Mary and Wyatt Upchurch for their generosity in donating the land that has made this center possible."

"Mary Upchurch has long been an outstanding member of the college board of trustees. We are delighted that the new building will bear the name of these good friends of Sandhills Community College."

Owners of the Tarheel Turkey Hatchery in Raeford, the Upchurches deeded 10.4 acres of land for the future education (See HOKE CENTER, page 9A)



Dr. George Poehlman



Dr. W. Richard Schmits

there were terrible gray skies. I came down here, and there were azaleas and forsythias and dogwoods, and it looked like heaven. The people were so friendly. Duke Chapel was so beautiful. It just really made a big impression on me."

He says he knew from the moment he stepped onto the Duke campus that he would eventually return to North Carolina to make it his permanent home.

After following in his grandfather's footsteps and becoming a physician, Dr. Schmits decided to attain another (See DOCTORS, page 7A)



The way we were

City employees Johnny Melton, left, and Mike Lucas lower Raeford's time capsule into the ground. The water-tight capsule, containing items relating to present-day Raeford, is to be opened by a Raeford mayor in the year 2101. The burying of the time capsule was the last item on the agenda of the city's 100th birthday celebration.

Budget crisis: county asks schools to cut

Board of Education holds special session

By KRISTIN GUTHRIE
Staff writer

The Hoke board of education met in a special session last night to discuss some possible ways to cope with the county commissioners' plea for the board to cut its budget request for the 2001-02 school year.

The commissioners recently met with school finance officer Carolyn Olivarez to request that the board find a way to reduce its budget request and even asked if the school system could make do with no increase over last year's funding.

Olivarez responded that there was no way the school system could open its doors with no additional funds. At the conclusion of the meeting between the commissioners and Olivarez, the commissioners recommended the board consider decreasing its budget request by

\$180,000. Commissioners questioned whether the schools needed more maintenance personnel and speculated that the state might not approve an eight percent increase in salaries for teachers, but rather just a three or four percent hike.

Factoring in these two issues, the commissioners roughly calculated the school system could save the county about \$180,000. Olivarez did the math a little more to the penny and found that responding to the commissioners' request for a budget cut in these two particular areas would actually cost the board \$171,139, rather than the original rough \$180,000 estimate.

Board of education members agreed that making a quick decision based on the commissioners' recommendation without carefully studying the school system's budget would not be a good idea. They (See SCHOOLS, page 8A)

Sandhills Hoke Center named for Upchurches

Raeford campus will be complete in July

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

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