

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

No. 13 Vol. 94

50 cents

Wednesday, June 27, 2001

On vacation?
Hoke's top stories
are on the web
www.thenews-journal.com

This week



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the trail
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prominent Charlotte
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Those in military
do us proud
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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

Sunday night we finally got rain like other sections of the state have gotten over the past two weeks. My rain gauge registered almost one and a half inches of rain Sunday night. We have been fortunate in not having power lines down and trees uprooted. I also haven't heard of any hail in Raeford. I hope that the rain will not keep the farmers from getting their planting done.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs to be in the 90s and the lows in the 70s. There is a chance for more showers on Wednesday and Saturday.

Over the many years I have written this column, former Raeford and Hoke County natives have sent me articles and obituaries of people who have lived, at one time or another, here. Last week I received the following letter:

"Dear Sam, I read this notice in the N & O Saturday. I was so sorry to see William's death in the paper. Please could you put it in the paper. William was a great friend to me and my family. Thank you for doing this for me. Sincerely, Ellen Currie.

"PS, I loved the Centennial. Thank you for all you did."

Thanks Ellen for the notice and your letter. Ellen was referring to the death of William (See AROUND, page 10A)

City cuts \$200,000 from budget

Council passes budget with no tax increase

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

2001-2002.

"He kicked off a bunch of money," was Mayor Bob Gentry's comment about the less than \$3 million final general fund budget presented by County Manager Mike McNeill. Shortly afterward, the city council approved a budget for fiscal year

This coming year's budget of \$2,965,945 is more than \$500,000 less than the current budget of \$3,490,176, and less than the previous year's budget of \$3,168,655. It leaves the unappropriated balance of the general fund at 33 percent; last year's balance was at approximately 25 percent.

The ad valorem tax rate of 47 cents per \$100 valuation remains the same, and there will be no increase in water and sewer rates.

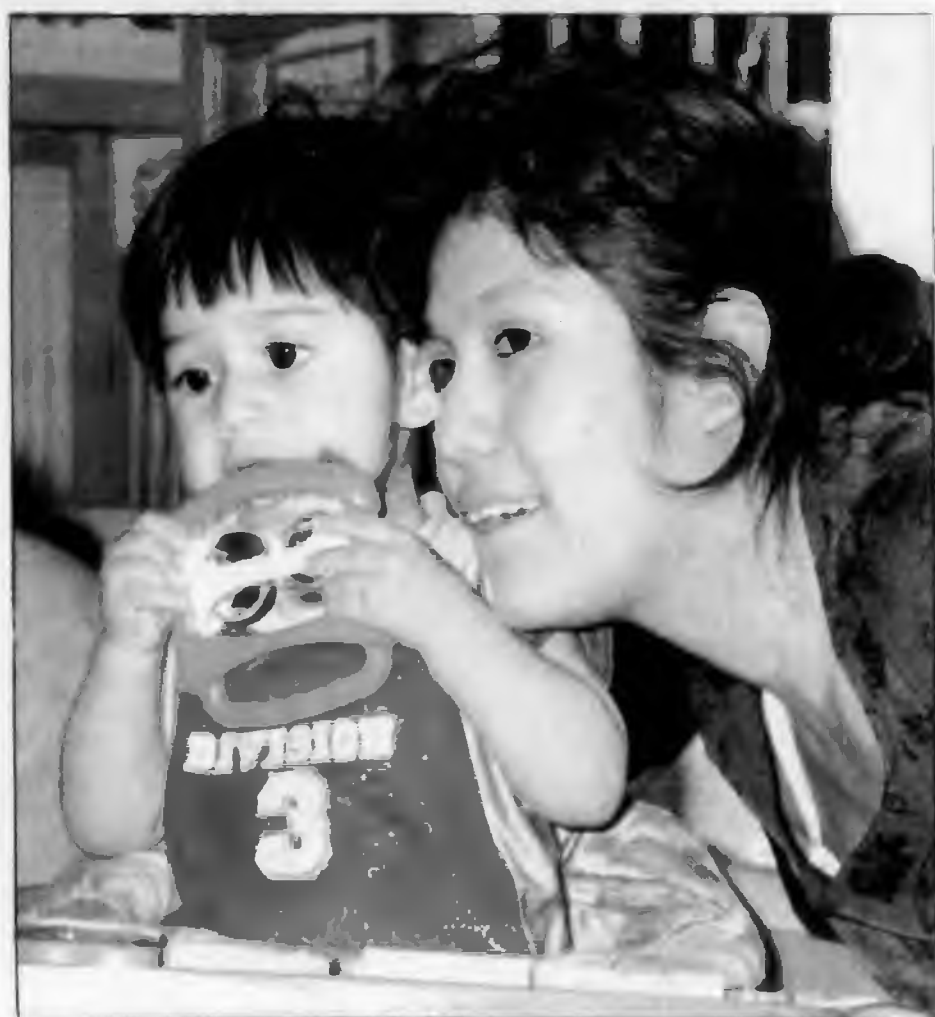
All city employees will receive a 2.5 percent cost of living allowance raise, and 50 percent of the workforce will receive merit increases of 2.5 percent. In addition, following an executive session on June 4, city councilmen voted in public session to give McNeill a merit raise of 2.5 percent,

bringing his salary to \$53,540.

At a previous meeting, held June 4, McNeill had trimmed almost half a million dollars from the first budget he proposed.

In the final budget presented last night, McNeill trimmed \$200,000 from the budget through these cuts:

- \$30,000 earmarked for improvements to the civic center;

(See CITY BUDGET, page 8A)

Sammy Sosa plays with mom Martha Cantor at the Children's Developmental Center.

Community comes through for Sammy

Little blind boy receives artificial eyes

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
AND
VICTORIANA SUMMERS

Samuel "Sammy" Sosa, the 19-month-old boy who lost both his eyes to malignant tumors, has been fitted with prosthetic eyes, thanks to the generosity of the people of this community.

Sammy, who came to this country with his parents from Mexico, received his artificial eyes last Wednesday at Carolina Eye Prosthetics in Graham. He was back with his caregivers at Children's Developmental Center the following day.

Caregiver Mary Lou Harris says Sammy's new eyes look almost normal. "He's a beautiful child," she says, "You've got to see it to believe it... If I didn't know he didn't have eyes, I would swear they were his own natural eyes."

Center director Shelly Daniels says, "They look beautiful. They're big brown eyes that look real. When he looks at you, it looks like he is looking at you."

Harris says Sammy is adjusting well to the prosthetic eyes. "He is playing. He is his old self."

Smart Start, a division of the Hoke

County Partnership for Children and Families, arranged for a special account to be opened in Sammy's name at BB&T

"People were suggesting agencies and they were not helping. I said there was no sense of waiting. The child needs his eyes and we proved we could get his eyes." — Tom Squier on the raising of funds to obtain artificial eyes for little Sammy Sosa.

Bank in Raeford. Hoke County Veterans Service Officer Tom Squier, who is on the Partnership board, serves as administrator of the fund on behalf of Sammy's parents, Raymundo Sosa and Martha Cantor.

Squier says \$3,000 was raised on Sammy's behalf in the first two weeks of soliciting donations. "I had talked to a lot of people but was really not surprised because once people in Hoke find out somebody needs something, they came through. It was just a matter of reaching people and making them aware."

Squier says Sammy's parents are humble and grateful that strangers made it

(See SAMMY, page 9A)

County tables Smart Start loan request

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

County commissioners tabled a decision to temporarily fund two Smart Start programs that will be interrupted due to a delay in state funding.

Commissioners met in special session this morning to consider the proposed budget for fiscal year 2001-2001, and were asked to include more than \$21,000 to keep the mobile preschool unit and the Parents as Teachers program going for three months this summer.

After a 2-2 deadlock, commissioners agreed to put the request on the agenda for the July 2 meeting.

Jean Brewer, executive director for Smart Start, a division of Hoke County Partnership for Children and Families, said the two programs' employees could be told to go home by July 1.

County attorney Neil Yarborough asked, "Do you know the money is com-

ing down (from the state)?" He was assured the money would be forthcoming by County manager Bernice McPhatter.

Commissioner Charles Daniels asked if Smart Start could make the request of the state instead of the county. "Not that I know of," Brewer answered.

McPhatter said, "I suggest the board not hinder the children... who would be future taxpayers." The county created the mobile unit called Gus the Bus, and the Parents as Teachers is a county program, she reminded commissioners. "You are asked to simply pay the expenses until the contract is approved," she said.

Commissioner Chairman Cleo Bratcher said, "I hate to see us not support the partnership."

However, Daniels and commissioner James Leach voted against the Smart Start request. Commissioners Bratcher and Bobby Wright voted in favor. Commissioner Tony Hunt entered the meeting

(See SMART START, page 9A)

Man found shot to death

Death of Maxton man is Hoke's second murder this year

A 21-year-old Maxton man died from a gunshot wound to the chest area either Thursday night or early Friday morning, becoming the second murder victim found in Hoke County this year.

The body of Quincy "Red" Fulmore, a resident of West Smith Street, was found in a ditch Friday morning at Wilson and Tom McLaughlin roads Friday morning. He died from a gunshot wound to the chest area, according to an autopsy report, said Neil Godfrey, Special Agent in Charge of the SBI's Southeastern District.

Fulmore was visiting at a mobile home at 3636 Wilson Road Thursday night, Godfrey said. He said it was unsure who the victim was visiting. "There was a confrontation," Godfrey said Monday afternoon. "It's still not resolved exactly what happened. We're still looking for

witnesses, people we know were there that we haven't been able to find."

Fulmore's body was found approximately 100 yards from the trailer he was visiting, according to the SBI. West Smith Street is located near the Robeson-Hoke line as is the location where Fulmore's body was found. Godfrey said shell casings have been recovered from the scene, and weapons confiscated. He said, however, it is not known at this time if the weapons are related to the shooting.

In another homicide investigation, the body of Juventino Tobon Garcia, 24, of Charlotte was spotted in a field by a passing motorist on McPhaul Road May 11. He had been shot to death.

Godfrey said there is "no apparent relationship between the two killings at this time."

Filing for 3 city slots begins July 6

The office of mayor and two seats on the city council are up for grabs. Filing for the nonpartisan race begins Friday, June 6 at noon.

The seats of Benny McLeod and Mayor Pro Tem Eddie McNeill are open. Bob Gentry serves as mayor.

Each office term is four years. The mayor's salary is \$3,460, and city council-

men are paid \$1,760 each.

The filing fees, set by the city council, are \$5 for a council seat and \$25 for mayor.

Filing is done at the Hoke Board of Elections office in the Pratt Building, located at 227 North Main Street. The filing period ends at noon, Friday, August 3.

Trainees learn by braving the fire

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

"It gets a bit warm," was the understatement of firefighter Roy Jackson II at a live training exercise that had teams of firefighters extinguishing flames 100 feet high.

On a recent Wednesday night, some 20 firefighters took part in a "live burn" set up in the bus parking lot at West Hoke Middle School. The class was part of a state certified fire control course that includes 27 hours of classroom and field work.

Each firefighting student is required to operate an attack line at a live burn in order to complete the course. Previously during this particular session, students learned firefighting skills by extinguishing a car tire near the Hillcrest Fire Station.

Raeford Fire Marshal Terry Tapp said the operation at West Hoke Middle helped the firefighters, all volunteers, gain confidence in the ability of the clothing and the hoses to protect them. The training also showed how good the water pressure would extinguish a fire as well

(See BRAVING FIRE, page 8A)



Instructor Brian Mims is outlined by flames 100 feet high.



Roy Jackson II cools off.