

# The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

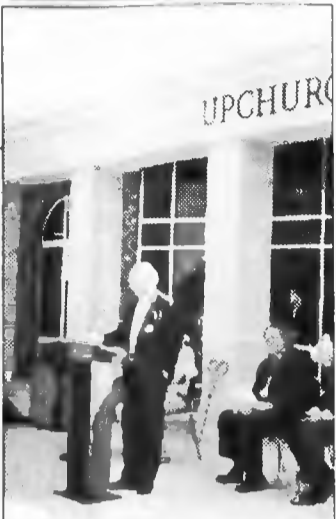
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Wednesday, January 2, 2002

Hoke's top stories  
are on the web  
[www.thenews-journal.com](http://www.thenews-journal.com)

## This week



Looking back  
at '01 in photos  
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Girl Scouts readying  
for cookie sales  
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What nut  
stole the fruitcake?  
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## Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS  
Contributing Editor

When winter came in December 21 the cold weather also came with it. After all the warm weather, it will take a few days to get accustomed to this cold. Anyway, we haven't had the snow like they have in Buffalo, New York.

I can't imagine seven feet of snow.

We have had over two feet in my lifetime and that was enough for me, anyway. Maybe the cold weather will get rid of some of the insects.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for highs on Wednesday and Thursday to be in the 30s and the lows in the 20s.

Friday and Saturday the highs will be in the 40s and the lows in the 20s. There is a chance of snow on Wednesday.

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A letter and Christmas card from Chan Roberts of Atlanta was very interesting. He said that he and his wife visited his sister Mary and her husband, over Thanksgiving. He said his sister served the Chocolate Pie recipe of the late Mrs. Ann Upchurch; it went well in California. He also said that he had run into Ed Langston in Nashville. Ed is a Raeford native now in the Army. Thanks, Chan, for the card (See AROUND, page 5A)

## Hoke seeks concessions for land

### County negotiates with DOT for loss of taxes in creation of nature preserve

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Even though the N.C. Dept. of Transportation has already paid \$5.3 million

for 2,400 acres in northwestern Hoke to protect the endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers, Hoke leaders are hoping for concessions to compensate for the land being declared tax exempt. This long

leaf pine forest is the dwelling place for five colonies of woodpeckers, who prefer nesting in hollowed-out cavities of trees almost a century old or more, and DOT

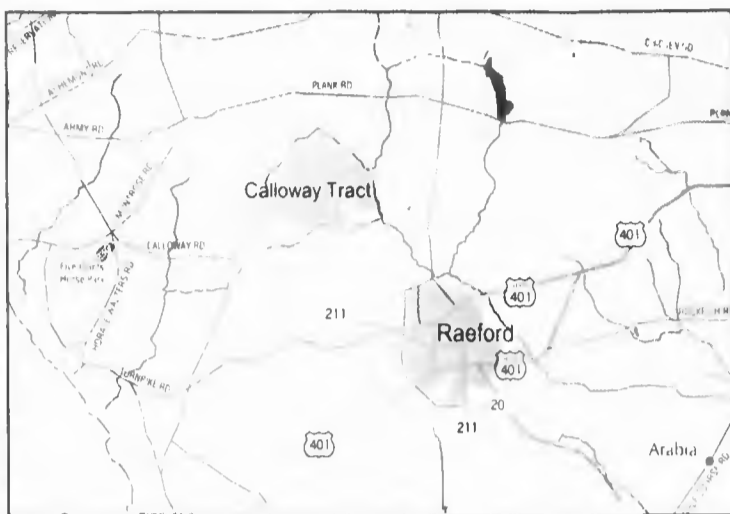
mitigating will bring more woodpeckers to the site, according to state biologists.

"Hoke County citizens fully support protecting the red-cockaded woodpecker,"

said Raeford Hoke Economic Development officials in a letter to Gov. Easley on December 14. "However, the prohibition of economic growth, loss of tax revenues and heavy losses in textile, apparel (See LAND, page 7A)



Economic developers envision western Hoke developing around the horse scene in much the same way as Youngs Road in Moore County.



## 2001: Celebration, Loss

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

For Raeford and Hoke County, 2001 is defined by both loss and celebration. It was a year of turmoil in the county, and leadership changes went almost full circle while city politics remained ho hum. Business-wise, it was a year of comings and goings.

And, yet, with all the community's ups and downs, the year ended on a note of optimism and unity that has not been experienced during the past few years.

With this in mind, The News-Journal staff has selected the top stories of the past year. Interestingly, some of the stories melded together.

Topping the list are the actions of county manager Bernice McPhatter, whose mismanagement of grant and E-911 funds emerged in 2001. She resigned in October and is under investigation by the SBI for alleged embezzlement.

The number two choice: the sheriff's race of 1998 was a newsmaker, and the race of 2002 promises to be another big one; controversies have begun even though filing for office has not yet

taken place.

Industry changes rate our third place choice.

We won and lost a boat company within the year and gained a FedEx distribution center that is hoped to be the first of more businesses on the Highway 401 corridor.

(See 2001 RECAP, page 6A)



McPhatter



Tara Wilson lights the Nia candle that represents the principle of purpose.

## Kwanzaa participants reclaim heritage, culture and history

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

"Kwanzaa is a time of reclaiming heritage, culture, history," Christina Davis McCoy, mistress of ceremonies, said during opening ceremonies of the 7th Annual Community Kwanzaa Celebration and Karamu Feast.

Saturday's event, held on the fourth day of a seven-day African American celebration, centered on that many principles, and children lighted candles representing each one. After all the candles were lit, the principles were explained and discussed, and entertainment provided, those gathered feasted on a catered meal of chicken, fish and yams and their own homemade dishes brought from home.

While the celebration's aim is to focus on African American heritage, much discussion centered on the "humanness of all

races" at the event held in the conference room of the library.

Honorary chairman Tom Squier set the tone by using sassafras as an example of the human race. The plant has leaves that have different shapes and come in varying shades but all grow from the same stem, he pointed out.

The leaves tell a story, Squier said. "There is only one race of people: homo sapiens," he said.

A Native American, Squier recently won the coveted Nancy Susan Reynolds Award for race relations as one of three of the state's "unsung heroes."

"I am thankful I was able to participate," Squier said of the Kwanzaa celebration. It was his contribution from the Reynolds fund that helped make the celebration possible.

Khiyah Price lit the first candle of unity (Umoja) followed by Tiffany McLean, (See KWANZAA, page 8A)

## County ranks high in Bragg land use study

Public invited to forum

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

With Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base considered the largest single employer in North Carolina, pumping billions of dollars into neighboring counties, the N.C. Division of Community Assistance is sponsoring a public forum in Raeford to discuss mutual concerns. Based on a recent survey, Hoke rated high in completing goals targeted in a regional land use study that was completed by the Fort Bragg/Pope Air Force Base Regional Land Use Advisory Commission, said Jim Daugherty, chief planner with the community assistance agency.

"This study represented one of the first of its kind to evaluate land planning around military bases," Daugherty said. "The commission hopes to learn of ways to improve the 'health' of local economies.

"We are seeking opportunities to grow without compromising the training exercises conducted on the Bragg-Pope borders."

Citizens are invited to attend the first public land use meeting scheduled for January 17 at 7 p.m. in the county commissioners' assembly room on North Main Street. Sponsored by the Advisory Commission, Daugherty will serve as the moderator for community discussions on Hoke's future goals with neighboring military bases.

"Hoke County has been a good neighbor to Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base," Daugherty said. "The county has been extremely cooperative with the military and also established a very, very positive relationship with the two bases.

"It is necessary for us to accommodate the needs of the military and local governments. Many of our counties rely on the economic revenue generated by the military bases, and it could be devastating to (See LAND USE, page 6A)

## County workers keep humor as phone service is cut off

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

'Twas the week before Christmas and all through the county office phones not a single line was jingling — not even a dial tone. In what Interim County Manager Don Steed described as "one royal mess," telephone service to about half of the county's departments was suddenly shut off by mistake just prior to the holidays. Even the Sheriff's Office and Hoke's Jail had phone lines cut off on late Friday afternoon before Christmas for almost four hours. It was not for a significant amount of time, Major Thomas Carlton said, and deputies used radio communications or cell phones for emergencies,

and citizens could still call in on 911.

"It was even worse with our Solid Waste department and Maintenance because they did not have communications or cell phones to substitute," Steed said. "No one could contact them for almost one day.

"It really interrupted our county business."

Steed knew the county had paid its phone tab regularly. He took his customary walk to every department to find out if someone was being "naughty instead of nice" in accidentally turning off the phone system.

Aha! And what to Steed's surprise should appear, but none other than a mystery telephone bill. Steed borrowed the crucial invoice from the Department of

Social Services that provided the primary clue.

"DSS told me they had received a monthly telephone bill from BTi phone company, which meant phone service had been on with that company for 30 days even though it was not supposed to be," Steed said. "We knew if that group had them then everybody had the new service.

"We were supposed to have phone service through Sprint.

"We still had to figure out why the phones were cut off."

According to Steed, telephone service was disconnected from Tuesday through Friday one week ago until it was restored by Sprint, the regular service provider. Prior to service being returned, Steed con-

tacted Mike McNeill, Hoke's purchasing manager. Steed questioned why the phone system had been switched to BTi from Sprint without anyone's knowledge.

Steed said McNeill admitted it was all a mistake. McNeill had apparently signed a contract with BTi without the commissioners' approval in order to lock in a price until he could present the proposal to the board, Steed added. In September, McNeill presented the recommended change to commissioners for BTi to replace Sprint as the county's telephone carrier. However, county commissioners rejected the presentation, saying they would remain with Sprint.

A Sprint representative had previously (See PHONE SERVICE, page 7A)