

# The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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

## This week



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## Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS  
Contributing Editor

It is hard to figure out the weather. A few days will be hot and then the cold air and frost will appear. It is no wonder that many people are going to the doctor with colds or flu. Maybe the six weeks after the groundhog saw his shadow the weather will again become stable. Let's hope so!

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs on Wednesday and Thursday to be in the 50s and the lows in the 30s. Friday and Saturday the highs will be in the 60s and the lows in the high 30s or low 40s. There is no rain in the forecast.

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For many years I have been attending the Legislative Breakfast at Burlington Industries. The Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce sponsors this event and it is always filled to capacity. It will be held this coming Saturday, February 16 at 8:30 a.m. As the Chamber Newsletter stated, this is election year. This will mean that all the people running for office will be on hand.

So if you haven't purchased a ticket, you should do so at once. If not then you will have to wait outside to see the candidates. The breakfast food is always the best and you get plenty of it.

(See AROUND, page 12A)

## Hoke: impact of nature land \$25 million

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

western Hoke.

Community leaders say they were "very well received" by N.C. Dept. of Transportation (DOT) officials at a meeting in Raleigh last month concerning DOT's purchase of a 2,500-acre tract in

Hoke leaders met with DOT officers to ask for compensation to offset the negative economic impact of the Calloway Tract on the county's coffers. The acreage of longleaf forest, dedicated for a nature conservancy, has been taken off the tax books and will not be available for devel-

opment. Hoke's leaders say the cost to the community could reach more than \$25 million.

"It is our understanding this land was purchased for conservation use, balancing the use and destruction of environmentally sensitive land that is used during the construction of transportation related

projects across the state," A.K. "Dooie" Leach, chairman of the Raeford Hoke Economic Development Commission, wrote DOT Secretary Lyndo Tippet after the meeting. "While we support this concept, we are forced to bear the economic cost for areas of the state that gain eco-  
(See LAND IMPACT, page 9A)

## Conference Champs



### Winning Eagles

The East Hoke Middle Eagles captured conference championships, the boys, after a season record of 14-1, and the girls, after a 13-2 record. Boys pictured are (back row, from left) Jeffery Gilliespe, Coach Monroe, Maurice Jones, D'Angelo Walker, Keith Harris, Willie Ellerbe, Anthony McCamie, Javierre Marshall, Coach Modlin, Anthony Rainey, (front, kneeling) Roderick Daniels, Robert Malloy, Lares Blue, Thomas McKinley, Freddie McPhaul and Shane Creft. Girls pictured are (front row, from left) LaSwanda Peterkin, Lea Walker, Keisha Hardaway, Tiffany Blue, Chayla Scriven, Raquel Haynes, Shontanette Shaw, (back row) head coach Shelia Hollingsworth, Jessica McRae, Alleen Thomas, Jasmine Hollingsworth, Whitney McDuffie, Dalesha Dudley, Bianca Shaw, assistant coach Sabrina Padgett.

## SBI takes files from attorney

Related to investigation of McPhatter

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Armed with a warrant, the State Bureau of Investigation took documents from the office of Hoke contract attorney Harry Southerland. An SBI spokesperson said the documents were related to the investigation of former county manager Bernice McPhatter.

SBI Special Agent Janie Pinkston, a criminal specialist in charge of the McPhatter embezzlement probe, confirmed agents did examine some materials at Southerland's office the beginning of February.

"A search warrant was executed at the law offices of Harry Southerland to obtain documents," Pinkston said. "We had a search warrant because that was the proper thing to do."

Southerland serves as the part-time contract attorney for Hoke, conducting foreclosure proceedings against people delinquent on their property taxes. His firm, Southerland & Associates, is located on Fayetteville Road. He said he's been told "everything is fine."

According to Pinkston, the SBI agents met with no resistance, and the Southerland staff was "very cooperative."

"The records examined of Mr. Southerland do pertain to the current SBI investigation of former county manager Bernice McPhatter," Pinkston said.

When asked if there was any suspected link between Southerland and McPhatter, Pinkston declined to comment.

According to Pinkston, the search was a routine matter. She declined to say on what grounds the search warrant was obtained in order for a judge to grant the order.

"The record of the search warrant is sealed and not considered a public record even though a search warrant was completed," Pinkston said. "It is being kept confidential because of the criminal investigation we are conducting."

According to Pinkston, the search warrant will be held at the courthouse until a court docket number is assigned for the trial.

Southerland previously served as the authorized agent for The Locklear Group, Inc., owners of a building where the N.C. Probation Department leases a suite of offices. Locklear's building is next door to the Southerland law firm.

(See DOCUMENTS TAKEN, page 11A)

## Study again rates Hoke high in funding schools

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Even though Hoke's "real estate wealth" falls five times below that of most wealthier counties, The Public School Forum has recognized Hoke as one of the leading counties in its effort to

squeeze out more dollars for public school funding. Because of economic limitations, Hoke ranked at the very bottom in its actual "spending capacity" in the recent 2001 North Carolina Local School Finance Study.

A further financial crisis may be brewing with the county's school budget this

coming year, said Commissioner Bobby Wright.

"Our county thinks education is important, but the state has a shortfall," Wright said. "The state withheld \$396,000 in revenue from us recently that we would normally receive," Wright said. "They had to freeze \$95 to \$96 million state-

wide. This is money we probably will never see that will cause us to tighten our belt."

In spite of obstacles, Wright praised Hoke's recent survey results. Hoke placed No. 2 in its "relative effort" to pay for education, spending greater levels of its  
(See SCHOOL FUNDING, page 10A)

## Steed memo recommends salary cuts that would save \$60,000

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Aware that salaries of some county employees are way above typical levels, Commissioner Charles V. Daniels asked

if Don Steed, then interim county manager, could analyze the situation and find a solution to resolve the "mess." If the commissioners now consider Steed's suggestions, future salary adjustments could save the county more than \$60,000,

Daniels said. "Complaints of hiring kin and favoritism in giving raises were common," Daniels said of former county manager Bernice McPhatter's administration. "Now, we are stuck with people making more money than they deserve. How can

we reduce their wages?" "Some people got raises and upgrades that should not have received them, and others that worked harder were not treated fairly."  
(See SALARIES, page 11A)

## Hayes says extra layoff benefits approved for Burlington workers

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Burlington Industries employees losing their jobs at the two Raeford textile plants could soon be benefiting from a program designed to help displaced workers receive 78 weeks of unemployment. The U.S. Department of Labor has approved a program for people laid off

from Burlington to apply for retraining benefits, said Congressman Robin Hayes, who represents the 8th District.

"I pledged that our office would do all it could to assist these displaced workers," Hayes said. "I am pleased to report that they will be able to receive expanded assistance and job training to help them to make a successful change in their career."  
(See BURLINGTON, page 11A)

## Pedestrian killed when hit by two cars

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

A Hispanic man employed by the House of Raeford died in a double hit-and-run incident on Monday night. The pedestrian, 42, was walking down Rock-

fish Road near Scurlock School Road when he was reportedly instantly killed. He was struck and knocked down by a first vehicle as he was walking near the center line of the road. Witnesses said he was run over by a second vehicle shortly  
(See MAN KILLED, page 10A)



### Raeford officers advance

Shown from left, are Raeford Police Chief Mack High; Patrolman Rusty Cockman, recipient of the advanced law enforcement certificate; Detective John Pierce, graduate of the Criminal Investigators Academy; and Major Kevin Locklear. (See related article on page 10A.)