

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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Hoke's top stories
are on the web
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This week



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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

Now that Easter has come, maybe the weather will get back to normal. The temperatures have been nice for the past week. Over the weekend there was one thunderstorm after another. My rain gauge registered almost two inches of rain. Some other parts of the state had three to four inches of rain. In and around Wake County water ran over the roads and motorists were warned to be careful driving on these roads.

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

Easter weekend was nice even with the rain. Saturday afternoon the rain held up and most of the children enjoyed an Easter egg hunt. There was some rain at some of the sunrise services, but it stopped before the time for Sunday school and the morning worship services. As usual most churches had large crowds for their services. I don't believe that the ladies wear as many fine dresses and hats as they did some years ago.

We can be thankful that we can attend church and not be afraid of someone setting off a bomb like in other parts of the world. Wouldn't it be nice to (See AROUND, page 3A)

Million dollar budget shortfall looms

Board determined to avoid tax hike

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke is staring a budget crisis in the face. At issue as budget preparations begin: whether to dip into the reserve fund or to finance the \$1 million U.S. 401 Interceptor Sewage project, an avoid-

able 8-10 percent increase in medical insurance for county employees of \$18,000, whether to freeze some county positions and whether to allocate an extra \$1 million for Medicare claims. In spite of shortfalls of \$1.2 million this year, commissioners are asking Wood to keep the present tax rate intact.

"If revenues are \$1 million away from expenditures, we will have to seriously cut this year," Wood said. "What might have looked reasonable a year ago may not be doable now."

"We are in the infancy of the budget preparation, and I am still undecided of what the deficit will be like this year."

Wood's preliminary plan calls for: reorganizing personnel and some depart-

ments; requiring purchase orders for any expenditures over \$50; and refinancing some payments on county debt to lower the interest rates.

Commissioners have scheduled budget sessions with department heads beginning this Monday to analyze the severity of the situation.

With the state more than \$1 billion "in (See BUDGET CRISIS, page 9A)

County buys landfill buffer

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

At Monday night's meeting, Hoke commissioners voted to acquire 48 acres of land that will serve as a buffer for the Hoke Landfill, filtering out any toxic waste that may exist.

The N.C. Department of Environmental Resources had previously cited Hoke for violations at the landfill that needed to be remedied. More than one year ago trace elements of mercury, a highly toxic poison, and other pollution were detected in tests conducted by the state. Facing fines, Hoke provided the state with a plan that included purchasing land bordering the landfill off Doc Brown Road. It was unable to determine how the pollution settled into the landfill.

The buffer will protect surrounding property from any seepage into the water table, and also protect nearby Rockfish Creek.

If the county had not complied with state mandates, fines of \$30,000 per day could have been levied.

(See LANDFILL, page 6A)



Easter paradin'

Nellie McFadyen shows off her handmade Easter bonnet during an Easter parade by residents of National Senior Living in Raeford Wednesday. Also in downtown Raeford, about 50 brave souls marched for Jesus in the rain Saturday.



Shook urges people to register

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

With the May 7 primary indefinitely postponed, residents still have ample time to come in and register to vote, said Carolina Shook, Board of Elections director.

Until a lawsuit that was filed in the state court is settled about the validity of re-drawn districts, voters are still eligible to register. Shook said her office will be notified 60 days prior to the date set

for a new primary.

"Voter registration will be open until the primary date is set for candidates," Shook said. "Then we will keep the books open until 25 days before the primary is scheduled."

Shook said some local candidates recently sponsored a registration drive at Hoke County High School.

"We received 100 forms that were filled out by students that were brought in by candidates,"

(See VOTER REGISTRATION, page 5A)

Hayes resigns from chamber of commerce after 15 years

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Lawanna S. Hayes has resigned her position as manager of the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce. Her last day of work at the Depot, where the chamber is headquartered, was this past Friday.

Hayes was given 15 weeks severance pay with her health insurance to remain in effect during that time. Her annual salary, after 15 years with the chamber, was \$20,000. She began her employment

with the chamber on a part-time basis, first working 15 hours a week.

The severance package was extended to Hayes due to "the good will of the board because of her years of service," said a board member. "We wish her the best," he added.

When reached at home, Hayes declined to comment on her leaving the chamber other than to say, "I will be at home this summer."

Those chamber board members contacted either did not return phone calls or

chose not to speak on the record concerning Hayes' resignation. Chamber president Wayne Simpson is on vacation until tomorrow.

Previously, a board member had indicated Hayes would be terminated from her position with the chamber. The decision to accept her resignation was unanimous.

Jackie Lynch, director of the N.C. Turkey Festival, whose office is housed in The Depot, is assisting with chamber affairs until a replacement for Hayes can be

found. The chamber sponsors the annual turkey festival in September, an annual legislative appreciation breakfast, monthly Business After Hours social events, and the annual Hoke Expo which showcases local businesses and industries. It also hosts the unique annual mullet roast — in which community, business and government leaders give state-of-affairs addresses, and sponsors: Leadership Hoke for up and coming community leaders; a (See CHAMBER, page 5A)

Region saddles up for Stoneybrook Steeplechase

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Rain or shine, the gates at the 51st Stoneybrook Festival and Steeplechase open on Saturday at 9 a.m. at the Carolina Horse Park at Five Points in western Hoke. More than 10,000 tickets have been sold with a crowd of over 25,000 expected to attend the world class race and other festivities.

Post time for the races begins at 1 p.m., with 60 thoroughbred steeds saddled up to compete in six races on the manicured rye. Some of the finest jockeys on the East Coast will be riding in this famous race that

Hoke County inherited from Southern Pines two years ago.

It is going to be a great year, and attendance is expected to double this year, said Roger Secrist, president of the Park's Foundation.

With a purse for the winners totaling

more than \$72,000, racing enthusiasts will be viewing the race under colorful medieval-style tents while tailgating, or from guest bleachers. Surrounding the almost mile-long oblong course are 250 acres of meadows and rolling woodlands where (See STONEYBROOK, page 5A)



The horse park as work continues in preparation for an expected crowd of 25,000 people this weekend.

Scholarship fund for twins grows

More than \$2,000 has been deposited in the education scholarship established for Holly and Megan Stauffer, six-year-old twin daughters of Raeford Police Sgt. Clifford Stauffer Jr.

Stauffer died in a vehicle accident February 4.

The News-Journal and Dickson Press began the scholarship fund with a contribution of \$500. Stauffer's widow, Susan was a former employee of Dickson Press, working as an advertising representative for The News-Journal.

In addition to his employment as a police officer, Stauffer was a dedi- (See SCHOLARSHIP, page 8A)