

# The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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50 cents

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

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

## This week



Hoke High choirs  
schedule May  
performance  
page 6A

Superintendent  
applications  
unsealed  
page 3A

Uninvited guest  
causes 'hiss'-yfit  
page 7A

## Index

Calendar	8B
Classifieds	7B
Deaths	6A
Editorials	2-3A
Engagements	3B
Legals	4-6B
Public Record	6A
Religion	5A
School	2, 4B; 8A
Socials	3B
Sports	10A
Weddings	3B

## Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS  
Contributing Editor

I can't remember the weather being so unpredictable. Even with all the high tech equipment the weather reporters still can't forecast correctly. I heard one reporter state last week that he had goofed again. You don't know whether to leave your heat or air conditioner on. Also, it seems that the rain goes below or above us on the map. Many places got three inches or more last week and we got only three-quarters or less. I guess we should be pleased with that.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the high Wednesday to be in the 90s and the low in the 60s. Thursday the high will be in the high 80s and the low in the 60s. Friday and Saturday the highs will be in the low 80s or high 70s and the lows will be in the 50s. There is a chance of rain on Thursday.

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Someone asked me Sunday when the primary election would be held. Of course I couldn't answer him because the date hasn't been set. A member of the General Assembly said last week that they should be given the chance to do the job. He said they knew better than a judge. Now this started me to thinking. Why didn't they draw the districts correctly at the last session?

I still remember the districts in Hoke County. We have three different represent-

(See AROUND, page 8A)

## Burlington denied reduction in taxes Citizens oppose plant's request

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Faced with whether it was legal to devalue the property of Burlington Industries, Inc. and opposition from Rockfish citizens, the Board of Equalization and Review unanimously voted against

allowing the textile company a tax break on Monday evening. If it had been granted, Burlington officials' request to reduce its \$7.3 million tax assessment by \$2 million would have generated a tax decrease of \$14,000 annually for the next four years. It would have been a "goodwill gesture" on the part of the county commissioners if

the reduction had been approved, Commissioners Charles V. Daniels said.

"It hurt me to turn down Burlington," Daniels said. "It is one of the worst decisions I have had to make since I was a commissioner."

"The county's relationship with Burlington has been close over the years, and we know it is struggling. We have so many people that have worked for them

previously and so many who are still employed with the firm."

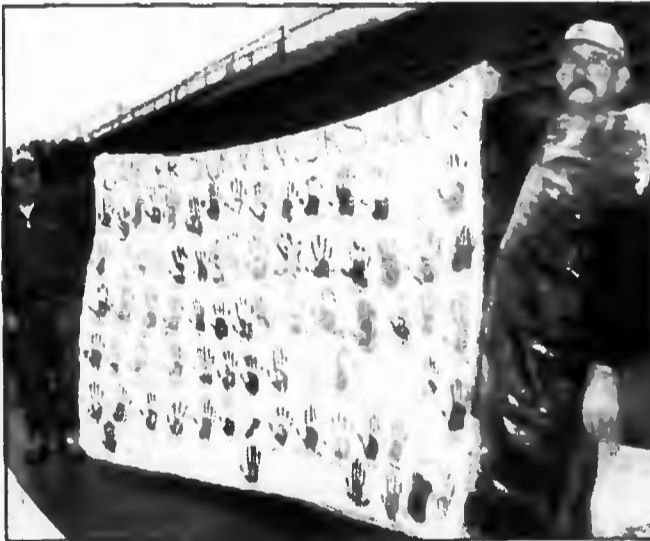
Daniels said the board hoped to eventually assist Burlington through economic development incentives rather than a tax savings plan. Burlington officials appeared "real receptive" to the board's suggestions, Daniels added.

"I could not vote on the request because" (See BURLINGTON, page 6A)



### Relay nears goal

The American Cancer Society Relay For Life went off without a hitch — except for 12 hours of rain — and nearly reached its goal of \$75,000. With money still trickling in, the total is over \$72,000. The rain held off until after the lighting of luminaries (above), which were sold in memory of cancer victims. Below, a colorful reminder of cancer survivors present.



## No tax increase set in Raeford budget

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

The proposed FY 2002-03 budget given to Raeford city council members for study contains no tax increase. However, residents will pay a \$2 increase in sanitation fees each month, and water rates will increase by five cents per 1000 gallons.

The proposed general fund budget of \$3,004,955 is \$39,010 more than the current budget. The fund balance appropriated is about \$67,000 less than the previous budget.

One of the determining factors in the proposed budget are \$251,000 in assets frozen by North Carolina Governor Easley this year. "The revenues frozen," (See RAEFORD BUDGET, page 11A)



Mickhaela Renee Flanagan, 4, daughter of James and Melissa Locklear, prepares to sample a strawberry.

## It's 'strawberry fields forever' for Raeford couple

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

Signs alongside local roads guide travelers to WayBetter Produce, located on U.S. Highway 401 three miles northeast of Raeford. That is where you will find

"some strawberries as big as apples," says WayBetter Produce co-owner Phyllis Mull.

This is the first year that Mull and Perry McBryde have harvested strawberries off a three-acre field alongside of Raeford. That is where you will find (See STRAWBERRIES, page 11A)

## Strickland urges commissioners to adopt 'stay even' budget Financial crisis for school system at risk

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

An attentive board of commissioners weighed a request from Hoke County Schools to consider its \$3.5 million budget proposal for 2002-2003 and to allocate \$362,500 for capital outlay. The

school system is striving its best to do more with less in a "stay even" budget, said Interim School Superintendent Allen Strickland.

"We are doing everything we can to cut costs," Strickland said. "This budget is reasonable and restrained. It represents a zero percent increase in funding.

"We understand these are tight budget times."

While the board took no action on Monday night, Strickland pointed out the schools were in a financial crisis if the county did not completely fund its budget request.

"Gov. Easley has just ordered a state freeze regarding the school budgets," Strickland said. "The state is projecting

budget cuts on state school funds of two to six percent. At two percent, the projected reduction in funding Hoke schools by the state would be one-half million dollars."

Strickland says he thinks the state's cutbacks will likely be from 4 to 6 percent for Hoke and other counties. That could result in a shortfall in Hoke schools of almost \$1 million for next year, he said. (See SCHOOLS, page 6A)

## DOT says purchase of Calloway tract not intended to protect Fort Bragg

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

A spokesman for the N.C. Department of Transportation said there has been no cover-up by the state agency or The Nature Conservancy, denying that land purchased in western Hoke will be used to "protect" Fort Bragg's southern border. With the designation of the 2,400 Calloway Tract on Highway 211 as a preserve for the red-cockaded woodpeckers, the NCDOT's purpose is not

trying to ensure the military base retains buffers, said State Biologist Hal Bain of the NCDOT.

Confusion over motives for the state's purchase of the land arose when a press release was sent out from Congressman Robin Hayes' office. In the release, it stated that approximately 4,800 acres of land bordering Fort Bragg was part of the Legacies Resource Management Program. An inquiry was made to Hayes' office, asking if (See CALLOWAY TRACT, page 12A)

### Cancer survivor

Young Sammy Sosa lost his eyes to cancer. He just completed the Survivor's Walk at Relay For Life Friday and is shown with his father, Raymundo. Additional coverage of the Relay will follow in next week's News-Journal.

