

The News-Journal

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50¢

No. 18 Vol. 95

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, July 31, 2002

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Leach withdraws from house race

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
STAFF WRITER



James Leach

After campaigning for the N.C. House of Representatives seat in the 48th District, Hoke Commissioner James A. Leach announced on Monday he has withdrawn from the race. Leach previously filed in February, but decided not to file again for

the seat held by incumbent Rep. Donald Bonner of Rowland. When the U.S. Justice Department approved the new N.C. House and Senate districts two weeks ago, candidates were required to re-file between July 19-26 — even if they

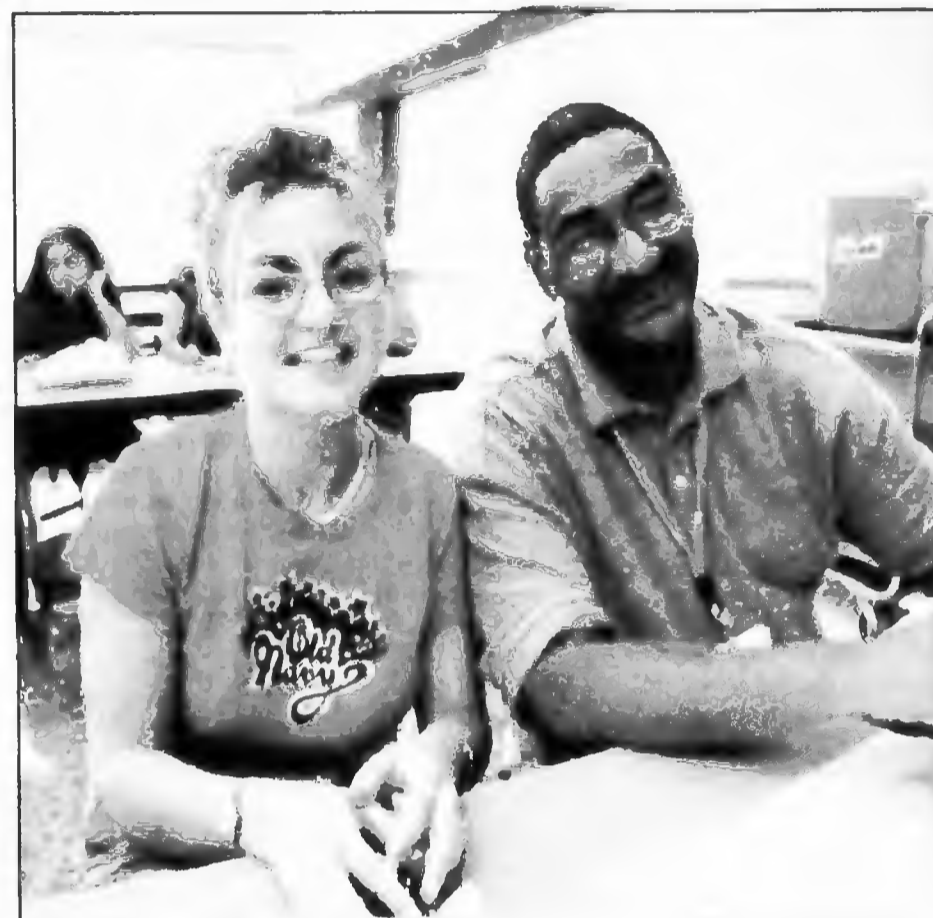
had already filed.

"I felt really good about running, but it was always in the back of my mind that I might withdraw from the race," Leach said. "Some time ago I had a conversation with Mr. Bonner in Raleigh. He indicated to me he would like to remain in office for one more term. "Out of respect for him, I decided last

week to not oppose him in this election," he said.

"We have always been very friendly and worked together," Leach said. "I supported him in past campaigns, and I will support him during this election."

A lifelong Democrat and Hoke native, Leach would have been the first African (See WITHDRAWS, page 10A)



Welcome back Kelli Brayboy, a student, and Bobby Little, assistant principal, help Hoke High School students with paperwork at open house Monday. Students returned to school Tuesday.

Leach appeals ruling reopening estate

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
STAFF WRITER

properly managed the estate of a Moore County woman.

Hoke County Commissioner James Leach has appealed a superior court ruling that found he and his wife im-

The court on July 18 declared Leach not to be a "proper person" to administer the estate of Dorothy Dawkins Allen, (See LEACH APPEALS, page 11A)



Strictly for the birds... Robert Carson, a Hoke County employee, grows acres of sunflowers just for the birds in front of his West Hoke home.

Trial of two accused of shooting deputy may be moved

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
STAFF WRITER

The selection of a jury to prosecute two men for the attempted murder of a Scotland County deputy in Hoke County has been delayed.

Timothy Lee Jordan and William Glenn Barefoot are charged with trying to kill Maj. Dan Skamperle, who was shot at Park's grocery near Aberdeen on March 30, 2001.

A potential jury from Moore County was disqualified and dismissed last week due to a technicality.

Apparently, without realizing Superior Court

Judge Frank Floyd requested he personally hear any "excuses" from the 65 potential jurors, Moore County Clerk of Court Catherine Graham released jurors prematurely. Newton said Graham violated a court order signed by the judge.

Subsequently, Newton and assistant DA Mike Hardin and the defense attorneys were unable to hear the jurors' explanations.

"The 65 jurors had already been qualified or released out of 150 people that were contacted," District Attorney Kristy Newton said. "We were to have selected 12 jurors and 2 alternates."

According to Newton, though jury selection was to be in Moore, the trial was scheduled in

Scotland County and jurors were to have been bused. Now the trial may be switched from Scotland to Cumberland County, she said.

"We have signed a consent order asking the judge move the case to Cumberland County where a jury would also be selected there for the trial," Newton said. "The defense and District Attorney's office are awaiting a decision from Judge Floyd."

"We will still be prosecuting the case because the shooting incident occurred in Hoke in our jurisdiction, but the trial would be held in Cumberland on September 16 — if the judge approves the motion."

Newton said a conflict in the Moore court's

calendar made it impossible to secure a September date for the approaching trial.

"We basically worked out a compromise; because the defense attorneys had asked for a change of venue in the case," Newton said.

"I had wanted to prosecute the case in Scotland because Maj. Skamperle is still undergoing physical therapy after the shooting and is under a doctor's care."

"This would have allowed him time to rest during the trial process," Newton said the violation could have resulted in a court declaring a "reversible error" if appealed. She said it also opened up (See SHOOTING TRIAL, page 10A)

Fire marshal asks board for raise Schwarzbher says he may take better offer

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
STAFF WRITER

Hoke's emergency management director told County Manager Mike Wood and county commissioners on July 25 he needs a \$10,000 raise. Al Schwarzbher said his current annual salary of \$33,718 needs to be adjusted to \$41,818.

"I can state emphatically that this department has progressed farther than any other department in the county in the last five years," Schwarzbher said. "I would hope that a part of this was due to my management abilities and the work ethics that I always try to instill in my employees."

In informal inquiries of four out of five commissioners, all four said they would consider Schwarzbher's request based on his merits.

Some expressed doubts if they could meet Schwarzbher's salary goal because of the county's financial shortfall. One doubted Schwarzbher would leave even if he does not receive a raise.

"It is not the first time Al hinted he might leave," said Commissioner Charles V. Daniels. "During the budget process, I recommended that he be granted a \$5,000 raise, but it was not approved."

"I do think he is underpaid for all that he does."

Comparing his salary to others in the Cape Fear Region, Schwarzbher is underpaid by approximately 24 percent. In neighboring Scotland County, the same position pays \$43,476, and in Bladen County the fire marshal/emergency management coordinator earns \$38,559. But Schwarzbher's job includes additional duties.

He is Hoke's emergency management director, preparing for hurricanes and other potential disasters; the communications director of 911 emergency responses; and the safety officer. He said

Wood also recently assigned him to supervise the addressing for the county.

As the only certified fire inspector and investigator in Hoke, Schwarzbher's evenings and weekends are filled with answering structure-fire calls and working on fire investigations. He is required to complete tasks he is unable to accomplish during normal work hours, he said.

During the past two years, the number arson investigations have almost doubled from 17 to 33, he said. Fire calls and other hazardous incidents have also nearly doubled. In 2000-01, Schwarzbher responded to 138 calls. So far this year, he has answered 239 calls.

Schwarzbher indicated in his letter that he needs a response to his request by July 31. However, commissioners are not scheduled to meet in a regularly scheduled meeting until August 5.

Schwarzbher, a five-year veteran, said he has received several offers in the federal sector for his services.

"I find it worthwhile to work in Hoke and I would hate to leave, but I am on call 24-hours a day with no back-up person available," Schwarzbher said. "I get paid for 40 hours, but average working about 64 hours. I am not allowed overtime like the Sheriff's Office."

"My workload has continued to increase and so have my responsibilities."

Schwarzbher said during the past eight days he has inspected 11 new foster homes, two churches and one new store in addition to his other duties.

Daniels said he would hate to see Schwarzbher leave, and he thinks Schwarzbher deserves a raise.

Commissioner Cleo Bratcher Jr. said he was (See SCHWARZBHER, page 11A)



Teachers get out of town to prepare for school years

Sandy Grove staff takes staff development on road

Sandy Grove Elementary faculty and staff participated in a three-day staff development retreat at Myrtle Beach on July 10-12.

Staff members were involved in a variety of activities to include vertical planning, Marzano's "Thinking Skills," "No Child Left Behind," grade level meetings, working with exceptional children, reviewed test data, and "Write From the Beginning" training.

Patricia Gregory, educational consultant, worked with staff members on Friday to review writing results and to provide on-hand staff development in writing and "Four Block."

Sandy Grove raised fourth grade writing scores by 23 points while the state scores dropped by at least 10 points. There was much to celebrate amid all the (See SANDY GROVE, page 5A)

Hoke More at Four to receive free IBM computers

4-year-olds to learn computer skills

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
STAFF WRITER

When 90 four-year-old pupils entered the More at Four pre-kindergarten programs yesterday in Hoke County Schools, they were among thousands of preschoolers in classrooms across the state. These children will benefit from 299 KidSmart Early Learning computer centers and software, offering them a "jump-start" to Kindergarten. IBM corporation, which donated the computers, will also provide training so that More at Four teachers can effectively integrate technology into their pre-kindergarten lessons, said Gov. Mike Easley of the firm's multi-million dollar contribution to public and non-profit schools.

"Supplementing our pre-kindergarten curriculum with computer instruction is vital in making sure that our at-risk four-year olds

learn the skills necessary to succeed in school," Easley said of the pilot program he founded. "I am proud to see IBM partnering with our More At Four pre-kindergarten classrooms and making true investments in our children."

"IBM is setting a commendable example of the benefits of partnerships between business and education."

Easley said students will obtain more hands-on opportunities to learn with the (See MORE AT FOUR, page 5A)