

The News-Journal

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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Bragg buffer plan will go to General Assembly

Advisory commission approves plan to restrict land despite Hoke commissioners' vote

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The Fort Bragg-Pope Air Force Base Regional Land Use Advisory Commission last Thursday approved recommendations for a land use plan to increase land buffers around the borders of the two military reservations. The proposal

could negatively impact future development of at least 7,000 acres of Hoke's northern land that is adjacent to nearby military training areas, according to Raeford City Manager Mike McNeill.

"We have the most at stake in Hoke," McNeill said. "Other counties would not lose as much land as us. The biggest thing on the endangered species list is

Hoke County. It is higher in danger of becoming extinct than the red-cockaded woodpeckers are around Fort Bragg," he said.

Though McNeill and Don Porter, executive director of the Raeford Hoke Economic Development board voted no, eight other members of the commission voted in favor of the landmark plan. It

will be presented to the N.C. General Assembly in coming weeks.

The Hoke Commissioners previously declined to endorse the buffer plan.

"This is a dirty deal," McNeill said. "The value of this Hoke land represents about \$700 million and that does not include the development of it. It actually encompasses 12,500 acres when

you count in Hoke wetlands and the Calloway tract on N.C. 211, location of the red-cockaded woodpecker preserve."

McNeill said he voted against the proposal because it is in the best interest of the City of Raeford and the county to not have more encroachment from the (See BRAGG BUFFER, page 5A)



Miss MoD Hoke County finalists

The five finalists in the Miss Men of Distinction of Hoke County are, from left, Samantha Ray, Marielly Montes, Justina Carter (the winner) Rashell Carr and Elvenikia Southerland. More photos may be found on page 8A.

Precinct official seeks recourse in election fray

Innocent of assault, Walker accuses Rahmaan

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke County precinct official Alvin Walker, acquitted of misdemeanor assault after an election dispute, is upset because he was allegedly denied filing a similar charge against accuser Rashad Rahmaan, ex-campaign manager of former sheriff Jim Davis. Dissatisfied with the verdict of dismissal, Rahmaan said he thinks Walker should have been found guilty in District Court of the allegation.

Some Democratic leaders such as Raeford Mayor Bob Gentry supported Walker. They urged the State Board of Elections to investigate, but they were given the "brush-off," according to Walker, a Democratic, assistant precinct judge.

"The victory leaves a bitter taste for

me," Walker said. "This man was not a Hoke registered voter. He attempted to illegally enter the polls at Raeford No. 4. My side was never heard in court," he said.

Rahmaan claims Walker "singled him out" because he was the campaign manager of Davis during the primary. Walker was campaigning for Davis' opponent, Hubert Peterkin, Hoke's new sheriff.

"I wish the State Board of Elections would get involved," Rahmaan said. "I would be able to get fair justice. If Mr. Walker had apologized to me, I would have dropped the charges."

"Alvin Walker may have got away with this in Hoke County, but he will not get away with it in the 'big court' on Judgment Day. Even if Ray Charles had been the judge there should have been a conviction. I had the evidence and I had

(See ELECTION FRAY, page 6A)

This Week



Old and new in Friday's basketball classic
page 7A

Man wants cowbell collection returned
page 5A

Museum has deed in hand
page 5A

\$280,000 grant will help Hoke schools fight tobacco use

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

When students at Hoke County High School, East Hoke Middle and West Hoke Middle schools begin the next school year, their curriculum will be enhanced by a school-based tobacco prevention program created by FirstHealth of the Carolinas. Funded by a \$280,000 grant provided by the N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission, FirstHealth will partner with Hoke County Schools to implement the three-year plan, according to Allen Strickland, Hoke School Superintendent. Strickland said primary goals will fo-

cus on intervention of early tobacco use by teens, promoting health awareness and preventing social problems associated with smoking, and to encourage smoke-free school environments. Even though Hoke Schools already participate in a tobacco prevention plan, First Health's program will include expanded services for students, he added.

"About 145 of our students were in violation of Hoke Schools' tobacco use policy when the grant was written," Strickland said. "Our three-year goal is to have 100 percent, smoke-free schools."

"Second-hand smoke is mentioned in the grant as well."

With 30 percent of Hoke's population consisting of teenagers, Strickland said preventing tobacco usage by students is a critical issue. He cited statistics indicating approximately 23 percent of Hoke's teens attending school are currently smoking, a seven percent increase above the state average. Those numbers do not include students who may be using smokeless tobacco products, he said.

"We have already been proactive in Hoke in an alternative to suspension," Strickland said. "We have a four-hour clinic students may attend if they are caught smoking."

"Hoke has been commended for having

an alternative program already in place."

Strickland said the initiative also included the possibility of hiring some temporary staff on a 40-hour basis to implement the program without any cost to the school system. He praised Peggy Owens, director of student support services, who will supervise Hoke's plan.

Other counties participating with FirstHealth include Moore and Montgomery.

"There is no dollar amount earmarked for us specifically," Owens said. "Once we start the program, there will be incentives for the schools. There was no match (See TOBACCO, page 8A)

Dana's kidnapping saga televised Monday on NBC's John Walsh Show

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

"They had me locked up, but I escaped from the house where I was staying; Hector tracked me down," a trembling Dana Pevia told a national TV audience on the John Walsh show Monday morning. Dana recounted the story of how she fled the home of Hector Frausto's family to stay with Nigel, a Mexican worker who helped

her escape. "Hector and his father jumped the fence and put a gun to the head of Nigel's 10-year-old brother," she said. "He said if I did not leave that they would kill him."

Forced to return to Frausto's house, Dana was again aided by Nigel, said NBC's Walsh.

"I was so scared and tired," 15-year-old Dana said of her abduction and four-year struggle to return home. "Sometimes I

thought when they got tired of me that they would kill me."

Dana was 11 and a student at West Hoke Middle School when she was taken as she walked to meet a school bus.

Walsh said he was "thrilled" to finally meet Dana. He had shown Dana's photograph on his show, hoping for her safe return. Walsh described Dana's return in March 2003 as "nothing short of a miracle." After U.S. Embassy authorities located

her photograph on the National Register of Missing and Exploited children, an agency Walsh helped found, she flew home. She was accompanied by her two children, a daughter by Frausto, and an infant son by Nigel.

A bounty of 70,000 pesos has allegedly been offered by Frausto's family for the death of Nigel. When Walsh's show was video-taped, he was unaware of that alle- (See DANA, page 8A)

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Hoke's top stories are on the web; send us stories, subscribe

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The News-Journal

News Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD
General Manager

First, an apology for the shameless April Fool's story that ran in the paper recently.

The article on the state's efforts to fund education in Hoke County - namely the filming of a new TV sitcom called "Rockfish Creek" to replace "Dawson's Creek" and the placing of beer ads on school buses - was a great big hairy hoax.

So to those who didn't go to McLaughlin park to watch filming and didn't call the superintendent to express outrage, my sincere apologies that the story wasn't written well enough to fool you.

(See JOURNAL, page 4A)



Children's Day

More than 170 children enjoyed the third annual Hoke County Children's Day sponsored by Child Care Connections and Smart Start organization last Thursday. Spaghetti plates, lots of storytelling and other activities were served up for youngsters and 64 adults who participated.



Working 9 to 5 and then some
Mae Carroll, secretary of the Public Works Dept., City of Raeford, was named 2003 Administrative Professional at the Raeford/Hoke Chamber of Commerce and FirstHealth of the Carolinas 2nd Annual Administrative Professional Day luncheon.