

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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Two alleged drug kingpins nabbed in raid

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Two suspected major suppliers of crack cocaine in Hoke County — Joereca "Rico" Beatty and Michael Maurice "Pistol" Monroe — were arrested last week on felony narcotics charges after 1.5 kilos of crack cocaine were found during a search in Fayetteville.

"Their arrests have sent a tidal wave through the African American community to other suspected drug traffickers — worried they may be picked up next," Sheriff Hubert Peterkin said. "This was not a racially-motivated issue. These

suspects are even allegedly connected heavily to the Hispanic community in alleged drug trafficking."

Peterkin said the names of Beatty and Monroe were even reportedly known to students at one of Hoke's middle schools.

"These kids thought of them as idols who were above the law," Peterkin said. "I would hear their names mentioned when I would go to talk to students."

"The kids would say, 'You cannot get them,' but we did."

The undercover, narcotics operation was initiated by the Sheriff's Office. Peterkin said his office acted in partnership with the Raeford Police Department,

the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, the Internal Revenue Service, the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation, and the Fayetteville Police Department.

"We are sending a powerful message to anyone who attempts to deal drugs in Hoke County," Peterkin said. "We may seize your home and car, and you will go to jail if you are found guilty."

"Drug suppliers target juveniles to help sell and become addicted to drugs. They even prey on senior citizens, and we are not going to tolerate it."

Peterkin said alleged drug "kingpins" Beatty and Monroe both have family ties to the Raeford community. Peterkin

said the suspects listed themselves as "unemployed."

Beatty, 23, of Carolina Drive, was charged by the DEA agents. They executed a federal warrant against him for allegedly distributing crack cocaine. Other charges may be pending, Peterkin said.

Peterkin said Beatty was involved in a minor struggle with law officers. (SEE DRUGS, page 8A)



Sheriff Hubert Peterkin with confiscated autos.



Mayor, don't quit your day job

Slider the Swampdogs mascot escorts Mayor Bob Gentry off the field after the mayor threw a "one bounce" pitch to the plate on Raeford Night. See story, page 4A.

Emergency Management transferred to sheriff

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

County Manager Mike Wood presented a letter of authorization last Thursday to Sheriff Hubert Peterkin, distinguishing Hoke as the first known county in the Cape Fear region to consolidate emergency management services under the Sheriff's Office.

"I met with Mike Wood last week to finalize the agreement," Peterkin said. "Mike and I had an understanding of how serious the emergency management operations are for the protection of our citizens," he said.

"We wanted to make this work so we could keep in constant communications since we are in the middle of hurricane season. I commend him for his decision."

Peterkin announced Major Freddy Johnson, chief of detectives for the Sheriff's Office, has been appointed to solely assume responsibilities for emergency management.

He will be supervised by Chief Deputy Troy McDuffie, and Peterkin will oversee the emergency services division.

A Sheriff's Annex to accommodate the sheriff's detective squad and Johnson has also been established in the former Emergency Management office in the old National Guard Armory building on Central Avenue.

The offices will be located upstairs in the suite of former EM director Al Schwarzbher in close proximity to the

911 Communications Center.

"I want to assure the citizens we are going to pick up where Al Schwarzbher left off," Peterkin said.

"I want to commend Al for the great job he did while serving in his capacity."

"We will not be involved in the operation of the 911 Communications Center at all. That is retained as a separate agency."

Peterkin said he did not initially ask for emergency services to be assigned to his department, but it was offered by county officials.

He filled in when the county was left with an EMS directorship vacancy after Schwarzbher accepted a deputy emergency management post in Cumberland County, he added.

According to Peterkin, \$35,000 was transferred from emergency management to the Sheriff's budget by Wood, representing a portion of Schwarzbher's salary.

The Ford Expedition vehicle used by Schwarzbher will be used by Johnson. "This money is now in the Sheriff's Office budget," Peterkin said. We were approved to hire an additional deputy with these funds to take up some of the slack in investigating crimes.

"A portion of the funds will also supplement Johnson's salary because of the additional duties he has accepted."

"It will be saving the county money in the daily operation of emergency management, and we think it will run very efficiently."

Peterkin praised Johnson's abilities. "I have every confidence in Major Johnson's expertise and experience," Peterkin said.

"He will also be handling routine fire inspections as well as arson investigations."

"Our detectives will also be receiving... (See EMERGENCY, page 5A)

Survey respondents say schools' image is positive

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Results of a Hoke County Schools survey sent to 3,000 people indicated the highest number of participants perceived the overall system's image as "positive." A significant concern of many people was Hoke's being a low wealth county, according to Hoke School Superintendent Allen Strickland, who reviewed the results with the Board of Education last week.

The survey, measuring the schools' image and finding ways to address their most pressing issues, elicited an 11 percent response from people who were randomly selected. The 330 responders consisted of 146 school staff, both certified and non-certified; 127 parents/students; and 57 community leaders.

"Parents wanted to make sure there were certified teachers in the classrooms," Strickland said of one key concern. "We have talked about our need to develop a creative and flexible funding program."

"People like Hoke County and what it is doing, but it is tainted by a 10-year low-wealth lawsuit that has smeared our county because of low wealth funding."

In a major criticism voiced primarily by school employees, 67 participants said they perceived that Hoke schools had a "top-heavy administration" with too many non-certified employees. This was rated (See SCHOOL SURVEY, page 7A)

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The News-Journal
News Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD
General Manager

If you've never played tug-of-war or wrestled in two dump truck-loads of mud that smells like manure, well, that makes two of us. That's where I draw the line. But the seven middle-school "yutes" I was with, along with 900 others did just that, 20 at a time last week in Tennessee.

In some strange way, nine hours of driving, a week of shaving cream and water balloon wars, human bowling and church van-pulls do seem to bring you closer to God — in several meanings of the phrase.

I noticed Joy Norton, the other adult in our group, also drew the line just short of the mud, but she was up for all the rest too. (So if you have business at ASCS office this week, cut Joy some slack, and be prepared for a lecture on being positive. Lord knows it's on the tip of her tongue.)

One game we played in the van on the way to a (extremely) remote waterfall was (See OTHER STUFF, page 7A)

SBI plans investigation of attorney Southerland once it receives report from state bar probe

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The N.C. State Bureau of Investigation is planning to proceed with a criminal investigation of Raeford Attorney Harry Southerland once the N.C. State Bar Association officials conclude their inquiry about Southerland's conduct, according to Special Agent-Supervisor Jerry Weaver of the SBI.

"Our agreement with the N.C. State Bar is that we will wait until they have completed their investigation," Weaver said last week. "We understand the State Bar has already finished their inquiry regarding Mr. Southerland," he said.

"We are just waiting for them to submit a final, written report to us. Once we receive that information, we will continue with our investigation."

Weaver said the SBI's probe against Southerland "may or may not" be related to the NCSBA's findings. The SBI was

requested by District Attorney Kristy Newton to investigate Southerland approximately one year ago on suspicions he allegedly "misappropriated county funds for his own use" of delinquent county taxpayers.

Southerland served as Hoke's part-time contract attorney for more than two years, handling delinquent tax matters and foreclosure proceedings.

A civil court order issued by a Wake County Superior Court judge prohibiting Southerland from handling trust account moneys is still being enforced since an injunction was first granted in May 2003, according to Root Edmonson, deputy counsel for the N.C. State Bar Association.

The disciplinary process concerning Southerland could reportedly be completed by the end of this month by the NCSBA; a grievance committee is expected to render a decision based on their findings.

"This situation was potentially serious enough that we got this injunction," Edmonson said last week. "That is all I can say."

"I cannot comment on the status of the disciplinary process regarding Mr. Southerland. The results will become public once our investigation is over," he said.

"Then we will go back to court to request a modification of the petition we filed against Mr. Southerland."

Contained within the petition filed by the State Bar, the court found "prompt attention is necessary" to protect funds belonging to clients or third parties held by Southerland in a fiduciary capacity.

Court records reflected that Southerland allegedly had problems with his trust account when more than \$100,000 of checks deposited did not allegedly clear. Southerland wrote four checks totaling \$38,849.88, causing him (See SBI PROBE, page 7A)

This Week



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