

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

50¢

No. 25 Vol. 96

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, September 10, 2003

State official: save old hotel

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Historic buildings and demolition catch his attention, Bob Murphrey told city councilmen Monday night.

The former Bluemont/Raeford Hotel, constructed in 1926, has Murphrey's attention. He thinks the abandoned and dilapidated building at the corner of Central and Main can and should be saved. "Renovating the hotel is more financially advantageous than tearing it down," he said.

Contacted by Mary Archie McNeill of Raeford's Downtown Revitalization Commission, Murphrey said he believes in economic development through historical preservation. "It is an important building to the community. It deserves to be restored to prominence," he said.

Murphrey recommended the city help maintain the building in a reasonable state of repair. "The building is sound. We just need to get that water out of there," he said, referring to a leaking roof.

Murphrey suggested money the city set aside for demolition be used to protect the building.

No grants or moneys are available for renovation through his agency. Murphrey said, but he said Small Town Development is good at being stewards and finding someone to "take it to the next level."

The drawing card for would-be developers is a tax credit that could bring in \$600,000 - \$800,000, he said.

General contractors are not usually interested in projects like the proposed hotel renovation, he said. Those developers who would be interested are "people who are experienced in historical remodeling projects." He said that is because they like old buildings and tax credits.

Murphrey said he knows two developers who are "very interested," and others have talked to (See HOTEL, page 5A)

Community's frantic search turns up missing Raeford woman

Hundreds comb region looking for Pam Frederick since Monday morning



Pam Frederick

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A massive search by land and air was launched to find missing Raeford businesswoman Pam Frederick on Monday and Tuesday, but her discovery in the popular mountain resort of Maggie Valley in safe condition today is nothing short of a miracle, according to Major Kevin Locklear, Raeford assistant police chief.

"Two family friends, Rick Sandy and David Kitchens, drove up to Maggie Valley, which was one of the favorite places that Pam loved to visit," Locklear said. "They hoped they would find her, and they did. I do not know the circumstances, or if she was in her van. She appeared to be upset, but that is all I know until they bring her back."

"All I know is that they had to calm her down." The friends contacted her husband, Garry Frederick, and told him they had found her in Maggie Valley at approximately 10:30 this morning. He quickly notified Detective Greg Thomas at the Raeford Police Department, who relayed a message to Locklear and Lt. Greg Spradlin at the Hoke Sheriff's Office.

Frederick vanished early Monday after driving away from her home on West Edinborough Avenue at about 7:45 a.m. — presumably on her way to work, Locklear said.

"There has been no foul play involved in her (See MISSING WOMAN, page 8A)



Top: Asst. Fire Chief Tim Frahm briefs volunteers on the search. Right: A forlorn Garry Frederick, perched on his pickup truck at home, waits in vain. Above: State Troopers board a helicopter.

This Week



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Hoke High students closing gap on SAT scores

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke High students raced "uphill" academically with a 39-point average gain on the Scholastic Assessment Test from 2002 to 2003.

"We are elated with our results," Allen Strickland, Hoke school superintendent said. "I heard that some of our students individually scored above 1,300 on the test." Strickland said Hoke students' average score totaled 899 on the SAT in 2003, cresting 49 points above the mean score of 850 in 2001.

The recent figures released by the state Department of Public Instruction indicated Hoke is still well below the state average. However, Strickland said, the improvement is significant.

"Our average score did not exceed the state's average of 1,001, but the scores were an important indicator that Hoke is coming back up," Strickland said. "Our scores were the highest point gain of any school in the Cape Fear Region — maybe in the entire state. We had 47 percent of our students to participate."

"Bladen County experienced a 30-point jump, but they only averaged 882 on the

SAT, which was below our score. They had a participation rate of 62 percent."

According to Strickland, the highest average Hoke students have attained was about 12 years ago when they hit above the 900 mark on the SAT. Hoke students missed achieving a mean score of 900 in 2003 by just one point, he added.

"We attribute our success to hard-working teachers at the high school, SAT preparatory classes, and a website SAT academy that 27 students were enrolled in last year to improve their strategies," Strickland said. "This year, we have 52 students participating in the website acad-

emy because a lot of students are getting very excited," he said.

"That is a plus because most colleges rely on the SAT results to determine admission eligibility for a student."

For the 129 Hoke students taking the SAT, the average score in mathematics was 461, and the average in verbal score was 438.

In 2002, Hoke SAT scores improved over 2001, averaging 860 with a mean score of 440 in math and 420 on verbal. In 2001, SAT scores averaged 850, reflecting a mean score of 430 in math and 420 (See SAT SCORES, page 5A)

Smart Start corrects issues found in 2001-02 audit

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

An annual state audit of the Hoke County Partnership for Children — popularly known as Smart Start — has found the agency did not provide adequate contract management and monitoring of some policies and payments, or exercise sufficient "internal control" in 2001-02, according to Ralph Campbell Jr., state auditor.

However, Smart Start executive director Jean Squier said she already took corrective actions prior to the audit. Realizing some improvements in the system were needed last year, Squier switched to a private accounting firm, South Central Multi-Accounting and Contracting, in August 2002. Tracking expenditures and contract payments for Hoke's child care referral agency, South Central also performs accounting for five other Smart

Start agencies in the region.

"We no longer do in-house accounting," Squier said. "We do not hold checks here; they are kept with our accounting firm."

"We have moved forward in a positive direction. We have worked closely with our parent organization in Raleigh to improve, using their guidance and technical assistance to correct the former findings."

An auditing team led by state auditor

Dennis Patterson completed the annual audit in Raeford in June 2003, conducting a random sampling of financial records from the previous fiscal year. During the five-day visit, auditors discovered two "material weaknesses."

"The accounting practices that were cited for Hoke were fairly serious," Patterson said. "There were similar discrepancies reported from the previous (See SMART START, page 4A)

The News-Journal

News Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD
General Manager

I was in the pressroom last week, conducting a tour for two groups of kindergartners. We had reached the part where I show them the final product — a completed newspaper. I reached for a copy of *The News-Journal* and thought, "Whoa! Can't show them this!"

Judging from the number of

phone calls, letters and visits, nobody else wanted to see a front-page photo of Michael "Pistol" Monroe with his middle fingers up either.

Suffice to say it wasn't our intention to offend; merely to show, as a reminder, what we as a society are up against. There in living color was the contempt of an accused drug dealer before lawyers put a coat and tie on (See OTHER STUFF, page 6A)

Remembering those who serve

Janice Chason-Griffie with a church display honoring "heroes" who risk their lives for the public they serve. She said the U.S. flag shown is from the funeral of her father, a U.S. Army veteran. See story and more photos on page 3A.

