

# The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

50¢

No. 26 Vol. 96

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, September 17, 2003

## Isabel likely to brush Hoke with strong wind

### East Hoke Middle School designated shelter, citizens urged to prepare, take storm seriously

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

As Hurricane Isabel barrels across the Atlantic toward the North Carolina coast, Hoke County Emergency Management is bracing for a severe brush with Hurricane Isabel. Hoke is under a

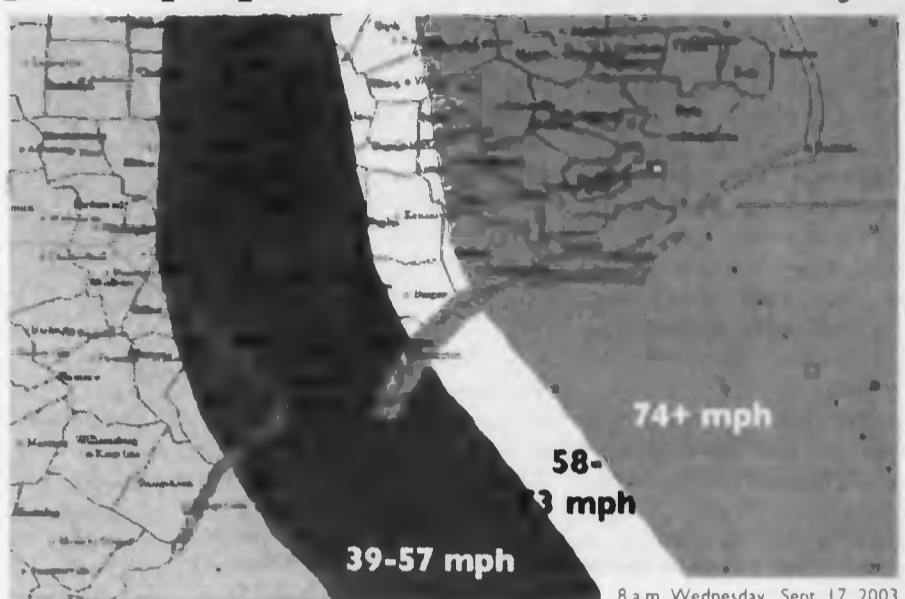
tropical storm warning — far more dangerous than originally predicted as a watch, according to Major Freddy Johnson, emergency management coordinator for the Hoke Sheriff's Office.

The National Weather Center in Miami issued the most updated weather forecast as of 8 a.m. today, but so far

Hoke is not forecast to be in the direct path of the storm. A tropical storm warning is extended across the entire North Carolina coast from Bald Head Island up into Virginia. The hurricane is listed as a category 2 with winds up to 120 miles per hour. That classification is expected to possibly change to a category 3 with higher winds as the storm nears landfall.

Gov. Mike Easley has declared a state of emergency in North Carolina as the hurricane approaches. The North Carolina National Guard has a pool of 3,500 soldiers and airmen on standby, and another 1,500 available to respond if Hurricane Isabel comes ashore.

"It is going to be worse than we (See HURRICANE, page 6A)



Graphic provided by the Hoke Sheriff's Office shows Isabel's forecast winds.



Alice Glisson sings the national anthem at a ceremony honoring those who died on 9/11. See related article and more photos, page 4A.

## Parade postponed, other events are on

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

It looks like Isabel is going to rain on our parade.

Yesterday evening the 19th Annual N.C. Turkey Festival committee agreed to postpone the parade, which was scheduled for Thursday evening some time after Hurricane Isabel is expected to hit the North Carolina coast.

However, other festival events are a go.

Lynch says, "We have to think about the children. Drizzle is one thing; wind and heavy rains are another."

"Friday and Saturday will be beautiful," says festival director Jackie Lynch. Most events will take place Saturday. Bridge tournament players enjoyed an evening of cards last night as the sun set on a beautiful day, with scarcely a cloud in the sky and only a slightly cooling breeze.

The Fun Walk is to begin this evening at McLaughlin Park at 5:30. No flies — and it is hoped no raindrops — on these folks as they circle the park, Hoke Schools staff and teachers making up many of the walkers following in the steps of Superintendent Allen (See TURKEY FESTIVAL, page 10A)

## Be prepared with hurricane checklist

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

As Hurricane Isabel approaches landfall — likely on North Carolina's coast — take the time to prepare a list of "reminders" of things to do, purchase, store away, and prepare. Even if the hurricane's path bypasses Hoke, these items can be utilized during winter storms.

Remember, candles are more dangerous to use in case of a power outage. Avoid using them. Try to only use flashlights or portable, battery-operated lanterns.

If an electric generator is being used, Hoke Fire Marshal, Major (See CHECKLIST, page 9A)

### This Week



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## ABCs results show improvement in Hoke schools

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Statewide test results released by the Department of Public Instruction through its ABC accountability program show an unprecedented 40 percent of Hoke schools were recognized as "schools of distinction," the second highest performance category.

"This was a record-setting event — history-making growth for Hoke County," Hoke School Superintendent Allen Strickland said. "All of our schools have done well."

"The state has challenged public

schools to meet expected growth, and we have risen to the challenge."

All of Hoke's schools, except West Hoke Middle, also achieved high growth, paralleling improved scores across the state. The percentage of students performing at the proficiency level is the highest in North Carolina's history. Nearly every school in the state — 94.3 percent — met expected growth or surpassed it.

Rockfish Hoke Elementary School, the first and only local school ever named a School of Distinction in 2000-2001, was also named a School of Distinction in 2002-03. Also, recognized as Schools of Distinction in 2003-04 were East Hoke

Middle; Upchurch Elementary; and Sandy Grove Elementary.

"The teachers have done a splendid job to focus on instruction," Strickland said. "This focus on learning has paid off. They have worked hard to hold expected growth so our students will respond."

Strickland also praised four of Hoke's schools that ranked as Schools of Progress. Schools meeting these goals included: J.W. (See ABCs, page 9A)



Hoke School Superintendent Allen Strickland examines higher End-Of-Grade test scores in math and reading for 2002-03 revealed in ABC results.

## Educators optimistic as they await supreme court ruling

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Seven justices of the N.C. Supreme Court last week heard an appeal by the state urging that a lower court's ruling on educational funding be thrown out.

It may be the final chapter of a decade-long lawsuit filed by Hoke and other counties seeking to force the state to provide the resources necessary so that poorer

counties can provide the same quality of education as wealthier ones.

Allen Strickland, Hoke Schools superintendent, says the final decision may be several months in coming, but he feels good about Hoke's chances.

"It was awe-inspiring to watch the judges," Strickland said. "We felt things went extremely well."

Strickland said the justices, a panel of some of North Carolina's most "brilliant"

legal minds, will be reviewing transcripts from 45 days of previous court testimony, and more than 75 exhibits previously presented to the N.C. Superior Court.

"The justices did not tip their hand, but I am optimistic we will win this lawsuit," Strickland said. "This debate is not about adults. It is all about meeting the needs of children who are at-risk academically."

"Any amount we spend to help our children is an investment for our future,

and for the successful careers of families of tomorrow."

Hoke is suing the state, demanding it fully fund an educational formula already approved by the N.C. General Assembly, offering extra "relief" for more than 60 poorer counties. In 2003-04, the state funded \$2.2 million for Hoke, categorized as one of the fastest growing but one of the poorest counties in the state. However, (See COURT RULING, page 10A)

### The News-Journal

News Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD  
General Manager

I see I have competition for April Fool's jokes. But come on guys, no fair, it's not April!

Someone brought by a print-out of an email circulating the net and distributed to county workers warning that huge quantities of UPS uniforms have been sold on eBay. That, the email says, poses a national security

threat because deliverers could bring you something you didn't order "with deadly consequences." Of course, the whole thing is a hoax — I checked it out with a simple web search.

But it got me to thinking about all those times I got something I didn't order. There I was thinking that the sales guy wasn't paying attention when in fact he was engaging in terrorist activity (See OTHER STUFF, page 3A)

## Providing affordable housing is goal of grant

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

County commissioners last night reviewed the results of a study conducted by Blue Springs-Hoke County Community Development Corporation concerning substandard housing in Hoke.

Recognizing the plight of low to moderate income Hoke families who have housing needs, Blue Springs' staff is supervising a building initiative, according to Thelma Bishop, housing project manager.

"They face significant challenges in finding affordable homes," Bishop said of Hoke residents. "According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, rental housing for America's working and poor families is growing farther out of reach."

"A time to build affordably has come to Hoke County."

Bishop told the board of inferior living conditions that exist in Hoke. She said 112 Hoke homes lack complete kitchen facilities, and 152 homes in Hoke are without complete plumbing.

Citing the need for more affordable home-building in Hoke, Bishop said 35.6 percent of Hoke citizens pay more than 30 percent of their income on rent. The poverty rate is 17.7 percent in Hoke — far exceeding the state average of 12.3 percent. She added.

According to a national survey, 37 percent of American families ranked affordable housing as their second concern. This, compared to 43 percent that said affordable health care was their number one concern, followed (See HOUSING, page 3A)