

# The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

50¢

No. 37 Vol. 96

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, December 3, 2003



## Dancing Doll

Katya Plewniak of Raeford performs as a Dancing Doll in the Waltz of the Flowers in the N.C. State Ballet Production of the Nutcracker at the Crown Theatre in Fayetteville. Performance dates are December 7, 13 and 14 at 3 p.m. See page 3B for more details.

## Board rezones land, picks growth despite protests

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Faced with substantial opposition from landowners, Hoke County commissioners still unanimously approved a rezoning proposal on Monday. They agreed to convert a one-acre tract of land near the Stonewall subdivision in eastern Hoke from residential to highway commercial.

Commissioners briefly weighed the economic advantages against the concerns of numerous property owners. However, the board agreed the county's tax base and job opportunities would increase by allowing more commercial growth. The majority of the board visited the property located at Rockfish and Myra roads, deciding the tract was compatible for commercial develop-

ment.

"This is a difficult situation we are left with, trying to figure out what we think from our projections," Commissioner Jean Powell. "The population has grown dramatically, and the traffic has grown dramatically."

"We anticipate that area may develop more commercially."

Powell and Commission Vice Chairman Charles V. Daniels reminded citizens that some businesses already existed in direct view of the acreage that was rezoned commercial. To approve an acre for commercial growth did not appear in conflict with current land use, according to Daniels.

Property owner Clyde Shepley convinced the board to approve his request to switch zoning on the road frontage lot. He said it would encourage more

jobs and tax revenue for the county. Shepley plans to build a 3,000 square-foot commercial structure on the vacant land. The proposed building will be used for a current business tenant to expand.

Five landowners spoke in favor of Shepley's building where a doctor's urgent care or a home security firm may eventually lease space. Shepley already owns several commercial sites in the Rockfish vicinity.

"I have had several requests from businesses, but had no space to give them," Shepley said. "It would be a small type of home business — not for a restaurant or bar."

Donald Riddle and Gregory Scott supported Shepley's rezoning request.

"I also own a small business in the (See *REZONED*, page 3A)

## Murder suspected in infant death

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Sheriff Hubert Peterkin said homicide is suspected in the death of a six-week-old infant brought to the Hoke Health Center on Monday afternoon by his parents. Complaining that the baby, Nasir Jones, had been crying and vomiting, the unmarried couple requested medical assistance for him.

"It was apparently already too late to save the child," Peterkin said.

Nasir was born on October 18. Peterkin said members of the infant's extended family and neighbors have

already been interviewed. Authorities have inquired if they had any knowledge regarding Nasir's suspected abuse allegedly committed, Peterkin added.

Peterkin declined to comment on information received from friends and family of Nasir. Additional interviews will be conducted today.

"The baby was barely clinging to life when they arrived at about 12:45 p.m.," Peterkin said. "The child appeared to have been severely beaten."

"There were signs of trauma on his body. Recognizing the urgency of the child's condition, a doctor affiliated with the Health department immediately

called for FirstHealth EMS to send an ambulance."

Cynthia Oxendine, Hoke's interim health director, confirmed Nasir was evaluated at the health department, but only remained there 10 minutes because EMS was called in for emergency medical assistance. She said the infant was previously enrolled in a child health services program at the local agency, but was unable to reveal any details.

Peterkin said the infant was transported to Cape Fear Valley Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead. An autopsy was performed yesterday (See *INFANT DEATH*, page 8A)

## Smart Start sees progress in pre-kindergartners' schoolwork

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Pre-kindergarten classes in Hoke County Schools funded by Smart Start received an "outstanding report card" for 2002-2003. The year-end evaluation indicates the programs are making a difference. Kristi Posey, Title I director and fiscal manager of the pre-K curriculum,

told the Hoke Board of Education recently.

"Smart Start deserves all of the accolades because they are the ones we get the funding from," Posey said. "We work so very well together."

"At the end of every year, they give us the results of their monitoring. We have certain goals and objectives to meet for our children. We met all of those goals. It

shows our pre-kindergarten children are learning at a much faster rate."

Smart Start, under the auspices of the Hoke County Partnership for Children, funds five classrooms, providing salaries for teachers and teacher assistants. Smart Start annually allocates \$311,000 of its grants specifically for pre-kindergarten development. A year-end review is published after Smart Start Director Jean

Squier monitors the local program, evaluating the progress of children.

Hoke County's schools serve as the direct service provider for Smart Start's pre-K classes, comprising almost half of the 12 pre-K classes offered by the local school system. The school system covers the cost of transportation and food for pupils.

(See *SMART START*, page 5A)



## Men save coworker from farm accident

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## Jordan to serve as mayor pro tem

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## Local educators use 'world view' ideas

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## Turkey Festival cookoff recipes

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## LA gang member slain in Rockfish

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Hoke law officers are seeking two murder suspects after a teenager was apparently kidnapped and brutally stabbed to death on Saturday morning in eastern Hoke County. Several motorists witnessed the 18-year-old, who was Hispanic, fleeing on foot from two men, also Hispanic, while his hands were tied behind his back.

This frantic pursuit occurred just minutes prior to his murder, according to Chief Deputy Troy McDuffie of the Hoke Sheriff's Office.

A California fugitive wanted for robbery, the dead man, Ricardo Rodriguez,



Ricardo Rodriguez

was initially captured by the Hoke Sheriff's Office several weeks ago at a Hoke checkpoint. Rodriguez was released from the Hoke County Jail last Monday after Los Angeles authorities declined to extradite him on the felony charge. Federal immigration authorities, according to McDuffie, subsequently deported the other man, an illegal alien.

"The possible execution-style slaying is thought to be gang-related," McDuffie. (See *SLAIN*, page 7A)

## Mullet Roast: fish and fishy stories

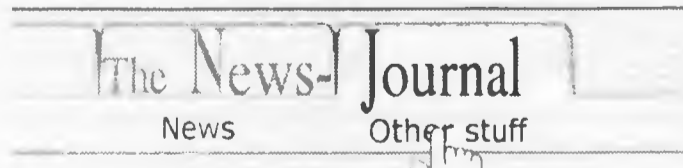
At the annual Mullet Roast last night, business people and politicians talked about the state of things. Clockwise from right: Sheriff Hubert Peterkin with Senator Tony Rand; Earl and Willaree McDuffie; Marvin Johnson. See story, page 6A.



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By KEN MACDONALD  
General Manager

What is it about us that we'll trample some unfortunate woman because she's between us and a \$29 DVD player?

I was appalled as I read a piece in the morning paper Sunday about a 41-year-old Orange City, Florida woman who was stomped and sent to the hospital by early-bird shoppers at a Wal-Mart during a post-Thanksgiving sale.

But then I thought, "Wait a minute. It's almost as appalling that she and bazillions of others lined up at the stores before dawn."

That is behavior I just don't understand. But in an effort to, I talked to Katharine McNeill, a teenager who was in the middle of it all at 6 a.m. Friday in Fayetteville. "It's fun!" she exclaimed as she walked off.

Fun? I bet she'll like driving on I-95! I think she'll like high school reunions and paying the electricity bill. She'll probably enjoy traveling with infants. I bet she likes Barry Manilow.

To be fair to the early-bird-ers, there was a time I did something similar, but it was different. (That sentence was my entry for (See *OTHER STUFF*, page 8A)