

# The News-Journal

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50¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, December 10, 2003

## Teen mom charged with murder of infant

Autopsy indicates six-week-old child was beaten to death, sheriff says



Latoya McLean is led from the Hoke courthouse annex to be held without bond for the first-degree murder of her infant, Nasir, who died last week.

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

South Hoke teenager Latoya Neishawn McLean was arrested early Friday morning after allegedly confessing to the murder of her six-week-old son, Nasir Amare Jones, last Wednesday. The infant died on December 1 of critical injuries, and his death was immediately suspected as a homicide, according to Sheriff Hubert A. Peterkin.

"I commend our deputies for their thorough work in getting the facts together on this case," Peterkin said. "The tragedy of this is that an infant is dead, and the mother who (allegedly) committed the crime is so young.

"Basically, the baby was beaten to death."

Nasir was born on October 18. He resided with McLean, who was unemployed, and his maternal grandmother at 249 Ashgrove Lane.

McLean, 17, has been charged with first-degree murder, signifying alleged premeditation, and two counts of felony child abuse inflicting serious bodily injury.

She is being held without bond after being transferred from Hoke County Jail to the women's prison in Raleigh. McLean has been placed on a suicide watch, according to law officers.

Peterkin said initially that Neil McLean, father of McLean, had assured detectives that his daughter would surrender to authorities last Thursday afternoon.

This was as a result of warrants issued for her arrest. When she did not appear, a BOLO (be on the lookout) was issued. Detectives combed the county

all evening in the rain, trying to locate her. McLean finally turned herself in to detectives at the Hoke Sheriff's Office around 1:45 a.m. on Friday.

### Cause of death

Hoke detectives were present during the autopsy procedure last week. (See **MOTHER CHARGED**, page 7A)

## Tragedy of baby's death impacts family members

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Two relatives of infant Nasir Amare Jones, whose mother, Latoya McLean, has allegedly confessed to his murder,

said they are grief-stricken over his death and find it hard to believe she killed her child. They wonder if she was unable to cope with the responsibility of being a parent because she is only 17 years old. (See **TRAGEDY**, page 7A)



Babe in a cradle  
Wynona Locklear and Lee Dial Jr. visit the baby doll at the Raeford-Hoke Museum's Christmas party Sunday.

## Hoke Landing shopping center opening set for Feb.

MiCasita, Domino's, Subway to join Food Lion with more stores on the way, Riddle says

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Food Lion corporation will take the lead as the first major grocery store chain to open in Hoke County outside of Raeford. A grand opening for the store, beside East Hoke Middle School, is anticipated shortly after the multi-million dollar Hoke Landing shopping center is

completed on February 4, according to developer Joe Riddle, president of Riddle Commercial Properties Inc. in Fayetteville.

Riddle thanked County Manager Mike Wood, City Manager Mike McNeill, the Raeford city council, Hoke Planning Director Linda Revels, and Hoke county commissioners for their help in making the shopping plaza a reality.

"Everybody in Hoke County has been so nice to me," Riddle said. "I really appreciated all of their cooperation. I joked with them when they asked me how much did I think would be my investment at Hoke Landing. I told them about \$4 million.

"I said, 'This is the first time I have had to write the value of my own tax bill.'"

Riddle said he purchased the 14.4-acre

tract located at the intersection of U.S. 401 North and Club Pond Road for \$1.2 million. It averaged out to approximately \$85,000 per acre.

"I am not sure, but I think that may be the most expensive land ever purchased in Hoke County," Riddle said. "I also purchased an additional 10 acres behind the shopping center that will be used for (See **SHOPPING CENTER**, page 8A)

## Man driving erratically hits van, dies

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

A Maxton man, careening erratically along Highway 211 Monday, hit one vehicle, almost clipped several others, and then crashed head on into a van, killing himself and injuring the driver of the van.

Ralph E. Starnes was apparently killed instantly in the crash that flipped his vehicle over in a driveway near the highway's intersection with Old Maxton Road, according to a witness.

Starnes first struck one vehicle approach-

ing him in the southbound lane near Red Springs. Continuing on, he finally collided — apparently head-on — with an Hispanic woman whose identify was not known at press time. She was taken to Cape Fear Valley Medical Center.

At the wreck scene, shattered glass and mangled parts of the two vehicles were strewn along the road for almost half a mile. Hoke deputies were forced to cordon off 211 for more than one hour as N.C. Highway Patrol troopers H.W. Hicks and F. Crumpler investigated the accident.

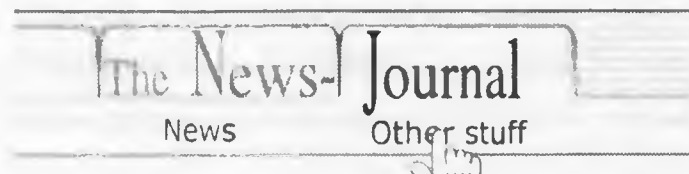
(See **WRECK**, page 4A)



A volunteer examines the wreckage of a truck in which a Maxton man died.



The van driven by an unidentified woman was left in shambles after being struck by a truck that crossed the centerline of Highway 211 Monday.



By KIN MACDONALD  
General Manager

We spent the weekend creating Hoke County's gaudiest Christmas tree. But we like it.

The lights are red, blue, green and orange, and they're those big bulbs, not the weenie, sickly ones that normal people like. There are a few white lights to give it class, but precious few.

The tree is short and plump (by accident) and is beginning to resemble a child only his mother could love.

As you know, when you're from Raeford,

you often have to create your own entertainment, and ours this time of year is sitting on the couch looking at the tree. We identify the ornaments and tell our unfortunate children where they came from. Not where the children came from — where the ornaments came from. The kids really would feel unfortunate to be hearing that.

Looking over the tree Sunday, I saw that several ornaments were Christmas presents from the Thigpen girls when they were in elementary school. They're in college now.

Another one of my favorites has a story behind it. Well, they all do, but men don't (See **OTHER STUFF**, page 6A)



Raffle to benefit abandoned animals

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