

# The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

50¢

No. 42 Vol. 99

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, January 5, 2005

## DSS forfeits \$179,000 in daycare funds

### Daycare provider, some parents complain, directors blames staffing issues

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Some parents and at least one daycare provider that runs two facilities for child care want to know why the Hoke Department

of Social Services staff did not spend \$179,416 that was budgeted for childcare subsidies for working parents and needy families who are seeking jobs.

This lack of spending resulted in the funds being sent back at

the state's request in October 2003 for other counties to use in spite of 405 children placed on the waiting list in Hoke for child care subsidies.

Hoke DSS director Bob Mercer confirmed the state took back the

money from the local budget. He said continuous vacancies in the childcare subsidy program resulted in a backlog of applications, but a supervisor and assistant have recently been hired. He said a large number of the applica-

tions have been processed since October, reducing the children's waiting list to almost half.

"We will do our best to make the childcare subsidy moneys go as far as we can, but there will always be a waiting list because

we get more seasonal requests in the summer and at Christmas when children are out of school, and our population is growing," Mercer said. "We will do all we can to qualify children for the pro (See DSS STAFFING, page 6A)

## Old hotel faces wrecking ball

### Demolition to begin in February

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

The new streetscape planned for downtown Raeford will be minus the Bluemont/Raeford Hotel.

A final effort to preserve the dilapidated and vacant building at the corner of Main Street and Central Avenue did not come to fruition, and demolition is to begin the first of February.

City Manager Richard Douglas told council members Monday night, "The possibility of rehabilitation has fallen through." He said the developer he had been working with began "making large demands of city services."

Councilman Eddie McNeill, noting that the property would first be offered for sale, said the lot

should not be left empty. He suggested a memorial park replace the hotel and asked for "thoughts and ideas and rough sketches" for such an undertaking.

The city has already accepted a bid of \$178,726 from T-Rex Construction of Durham to take down the building.

The city obtained the hotel in October 1999 after its owners faced foreclosure by United National Bank, which donated the building and land.

The three-story hotel with 42 rooms first opened in March 1927 and later became the "heartthrob" of the city. Through the years it housed teachers and a baseball team here for spring training and at one time served as a bus stop. It remained in operation until

(See HOTEL, page 3A)

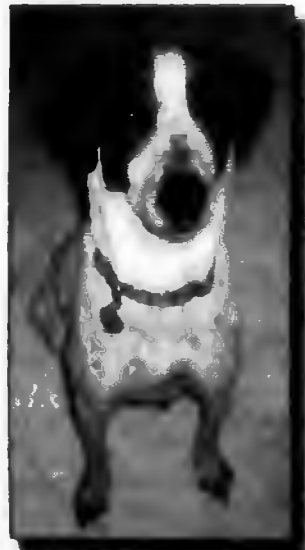


Taking the office of office, from left, are assistant public defenders Regina Joe, Celia Vissor, Herman Thompson and Jonathan McInnis.



Left: Rick Jackson, public defender for Hoke-Scotland District 16 A, takes the oath. Right: Hoke District Attorney Kristy McMillan Newton is sworn in.

### This Week



'Deployment dog' needs a home page 4A

Ornaments brighten yards page 1B

City firefighters get FEMA grant page 3A

Winston Salem minister is King event speaker page 3A

### Index

- Births.....3B
- Business/Farm.....5A
- Classifieds.....7-8B
- Deaths.....6A
- Editorials.....2A
- Legals.....5-6B
- Religion.....2B
- School Menus.....4B
- Socials.....3B
- Sports.....4A

We're on the web at [www.thenews-journal.com](http://www.thenews-journal.com)

## Agri-building debated

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

A divided Hoke board of commissioners debated on Monday evening whether to pursue plans for a proposed Hoke Agricultural-Business Complex.

Agreeing unanimously to advertise for architectural firms that could be qualified to construct such a project, the majority of the board remained uncommitted about building the center.

This, after County Manager Mike Wood told the board that The Wooten Company has completed a needs assessment study on the potential project. The study cost the county approximately \$5,000 with \$2,768 already paid to The Wooten firm. If the board plans to move (See AGRIBUILDING, page 3A)

## Newton takes oath for second term

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Taking the oath of office on Monday, Kristy McMillan Newton, district attorney for Hoke and Scotland counties in District 16 A, reclaimed her key judicial post for another four years while friends and colleagues applauded.

A Democrat, Newton won the DA's seat in the presidential election by acclamation after no opponents competed with her in the primary race.

Newton's staff of assistant district attorneys was also sworn into office, along with public defender Rick Jackson and assistant public

defenders serving in Hoke and Scotland jurisdictions.

"I enjoyed the second race even more," Newton joked of the uncontested November election for her post. "I appreciated running unopposed tremendously."

Beginning her second term, Newton was first elected in 2000, according to Robeson County Superior Court Judge Frank Floyd, who presided at the swearing-in ceremony on Monday.

"She was the youngest district attorney to ever be elected in North Carolina," Floyd told guests attending the Hoke Courthouse event.

A guest quipped back to the judge: "She

is also the prettiest."

Newton, a lifelong resident of Hoke, is also distinguished as the first DA in Hoke-Scotland to be serving in the new millennium. Floyd will be serving in the Hoke district for six months.

"Her legal competence and credibility has more than made up for her experience," Floyd said. "She does as good a job as any DA in the state."

"I have served on the Superior Court bench for eight years," Floyd said.

"She does a might fine job because she is always prepared as a district attorney. They (her staff) have their notebooks and

(See NEWTON, page 3A)

## Creek bordering Mackall site of potential sanctuary

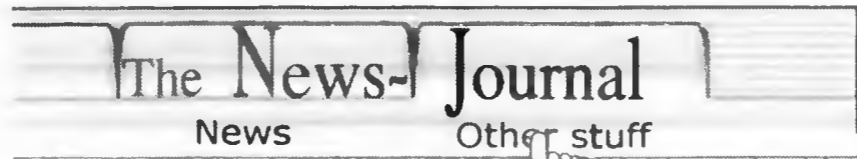
### Nature Conservancy plans purchase of next Hoke tract

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Even as vast timber holdings are being commercially harvested in Hoke County and some residential subdivisions are springing up in former wooded areas, The Nature Conservancy is embarking on a \$1 million project to preserve more than 500 acres in southwestern Hoke.

Planning to acquire Hoke land near Highway 15-501, TNC's objectives would be to protect clean water and wildlife preserves from development, according to Rick Studenmund, executive director of TNC.

With a quest for "saving the last great places," TNC, a non-profit conservation group, has applied for a grant from (See PRESERVE, page 5A)



By KEN MACDONALD  
Publisher

As a New Year's tradition, watching a ball drop in Times Square has never really done it for me. So when my friend Charles proposed a New Year's Eve river paddling and camping adventure I jumped at it.

In Brasstown, N.C. they drop a possum; in Atlanta, it's a peach; in Portland, it's a 20-foot, 600 pound fiberglass walleye. So I figured when you're deep in a swamp on the Lumber

River, the possibilities are endless.

Our third paddler was to be a friend of Charles' named Martin who is a city planner in Raleigh. Could be some interesting potential for jokes, I thought: "Raleigh city planner? Isn't that a little like 'military intelligence' or 'Microsoft Works?'"

Charles arrived a day early, and that, we thought, gave us ample time to do some advance packing. After all, we had three solid hours before bed to figure out how (See OTHER STUFF, page 4A)