

# The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

50¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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## Firemen want to ensure water for protection

### Water pressure in some areas not sufficient to sustain addition of houses

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

More growth sweeping the county and the potential threat of less water pressure to fight fires have some Hoke fire chiefs seeking solutions.

"Without a better water supply, many are concerned higher density housing would create a problem for firefighting," said Chief David Willis, Puppy Creek Fire Department's chief.

Most fire chiefs say there is no such thing as having "too much water" when

it comes to fighting a fire, but they think water pressure is still sufficient to fight most residential fires. They rely heavily on mutual aid to share water tankers from other districts to obtain more water.

In spite of challenges, local fire chiefs credited county commissioners, county

manager Mike Wood and Hoke fire marshal Freddy Johnson with attempting to improve the regional water systems.

"They do very well for us," Dennis Ridley, Stonewall Fire Department chief, said. "They do know we are volunteers, and we work on limited resources.

"Once we bring things to their attention, they do investigate it. Major Johnson really does get out and question people and reports back to the county manager.

"If we have needed something, I have (See WATER, page 4A)

## County finance director resigns

### Edwards leaves for better offer

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
STAFF WRITER

After leading Hoke County through the turbulent embezzlement case against former county manager Bernice McPhatter, Hoke finance director Scott Edwards announced his resignation last Friday.

Edwards will briefly address the commissioners at their annual retreat scheduled today and tomorrow at Camp Rockfish. He will update them on the status of the county's financial forecast for next year.

"I feel very accomplished with what I have achieved here," Edwards said yesterday. "I

have greatly enjoyed my job assisting the taxpayers who have supported me throughout my life here in Hoke County.

"I have tried to serve the public's best interest."

Commission Vice Chairman Charles V. Daniels said Edwards leaving was a "tremendous loss" to the county.

"Scott Edwards was the best thing that ever happened to our finance department," Daniels said. "We will really miss him. He was so familiar with everything, and it will be very hard to replace him.

"I think he was very professional."

Edwards said he has been offered at least five lucrative career moves — one in Raleigh. He said he has accepted an offer from an established Fayetteville CPA firm where he will be employed as a staff accountant. Already completing requirements to attain Certified Public Accountant credentials, Edwards plans to take the exam this year. He will continue to reside in Hoke with his wife, who is an assistant principal with Hoke County Schools.

(See EDWARDS, page 6A)



Scott Edwards



A home in the Hollies at West Gate is constructed using a panelized technique which enables builders to complete a home in nine days.

## West Gate opens as largest subdivision

### Community of 800 homes brings such firsts as houses built in nine days

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

In a vast field entwined with wetlands, the luxury community of West Gate is now open.

West Gate, divided into the Oaks, Pines and Hollies sections, will eventually become a

neighborhood of 800 country and estate homes. The project, on Adcox and Lindsay roads on land once owned by the June Johnson farming family, will become the largest residential development in Hoke over the next seven years.

The sales center, which will eventually be transformed into

a satellite office for the Hoke Sheriff's Office, opened last week.

Partners Watson Caviness and Ralph Huff, principals of Caviness and Cates Building and Development and H & H Investments, respectively, will simultaneously be constructing

two different styles of homes in the upscale Oaks and Pines sections, with the homes starting at \$170,000 and above.

Huff, his wife Linda, and brother Ron, of H & H Constructors are using a "panelized" construction method in the first (See WEST GATE, page 7A)

### This Week



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## Chason spearheads benefit concert for victim of motorcycle accident

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

When popular southern gospel singer Larry Chason visited his mother at Autumn Care nursing home, he decided to help Hoke native Michael "Brent" Hardin, a patient at the facility.

Hardin, paralyzed with only limited

mobility in his head, had recently been transferred to Autumn Care to receive better care after being severely injured in a motorcycle accident last fall. Hardin said the wreck was like a blur. His son, Justin Hardin, said it appeared another vehicle may have turned into Hardin's path when he was preparing to make a turn.

(See BENEFIT, page 3A)

## Fight over dog settled by magistrate

### Now everyone seems happy, including dog

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

After Cindy Bristow, an animal advocate and rescuer of displaced pets, narrowly missed hitting a small "mutt" romping in the middle of Aberdeen Highway in December, she stopped and rescued what she thought was a stray dog. Thinking she had done a good deed in saving the dog, Bristow had no idea her actions would unleash a controversy with Raeford resident Terry Dooley.

He later claimed to be the owner of "Bandit." Dooley thought Bristow had stolen his dog, whom he proudly said came from a "mutt bloodline" of a border collie and a golden retriever. Contrarily, Bristow said she rescued a stray dog without a collar or identification.

Accompanied by a Hoke deputy, Dooley went to Bristow's in December after witnesses said she was keeping his pet, and demanded she return Bandit. Bristow declined returning the dog at first because Dooley could not produce any identification, rabies certification, or proof of ownership.

"If I had to do it over, I would do it again," Bristow, owner of Solutions for



Terry Dooley with Bandit

Animals Inc., said. "I rescued the dog from being killed by a car. Nothing would stop me from providing safety to an animal that is in danger."

Indeed, Dooley turned out to be the owner of Bandit. In his efforts to ensure Bandit was reunited with (See BANDIT, page 5A)

## The News-Journal

News Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD  
Publisher

When Jessica Kellermann, a 2003 graduate of Hoke High and a student at Carolina, announced her plans to go to Ghana for a semester, I rolled my eyes and said, "Why can't you be like everybody else and study abroad in Europe?" But she knew I was kidding, and I quickly followed it with, "Cool! Go for it!"

That's because Jessica is *not* like every-

body else, and because I'm glad she took the road less traveled. Besides, they wouldn't have written a poem about it if breaking away from the crowd isn't a good thing.

Jess is one of those rare Anne of Green Gables-types who walks into a place or a life and leaves them better. Now don't get me wrong. She's obnoxious at times and *always* hardheaded — and thankfully she's two days flying time away as I bravely write this — but there is no one out there who cares (See OTHER STUFF, page 4A)