



The News-Journal

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Hoke residents slammed with high gas prices

Attorney general looking into allegations of price gouging across North Carolina

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Soaring gas prices struck the pockets of Hoke residents last week — reaching nearly \$4 per gallon — when Hurricane Katrina seared the coasts of Mississippi and Louisiana with category four winds and massive tidal surges and flooding. Gulf of Mexico oil refineries were partially disabled because of the disaster.

Unleashing a panic among consumers last week, Gov. Easley's warning to conserve gas prompted people to guzzle up the precious commodity in fear it would run out. North Carolina is one of four states where the highest numbers of complaints concerning price gouging were

received, according to the state attorney general's office. Gas production across the nation was reduced by approximately 25 percent after the disaster swept across the New Orleans delta and directly-impacted Gulfport, Mississippi.

More than 30 states have signed an inquiry request to investigate if global concerns about oil reserves caused prices to increase across the nation. State officials plan to determine if gas station owners or distributors took advantage of consumers by fixing gas prices or engaging in deceptive trade practices.

"It is wrong to take unfair advantage of consumers in a time of crisis," Attorney General Roy Cooper said. "We want to get to

the bottom of skyrocketing gas prices and plan to examine all aspects of the industry, from refineries and pipelines to the prices

people pay at the pump."

Cooper is urging consumers who wish to file a complaint with the state's consumer protection

division to call 1-877-NO-SCAM to receive a complaint form in the mail.

"I believe that most businesses

in North Carolina want to play by the rules," Cooper said. "But, if there are a few bad apples out there (See GAS PRICES, page 6A)

Hoke SAT scores increase slightly

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke County students increased their average SAT scores by five points in 2005, to 870, according to information released by Gov. Mike Easley last week.

The slight improvement in scores followed a sharp decrease of 34 points in 2004 to 865 from

899 in 2003. Hoke's score still lags 140 points behind the state's average this year. However, Hoke School Superintendent Allen Strickland said at least the local scores are not going down.

"I see this as an encouraging sign," Strickland said yesterday. "Our SAT scores are different every year, and the scores are (See SAT SCORES, page 5A)



Signs of the times: gas prices climbed toward \$4 per gallon following Katrina. Lines formed when many stations ran out of fuel.

Hoke, Raeford, like state, see drop in crime rate

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

N.C. Attorney General Roy Cooper recently announced a decline in the crime rate statewide for 2004 of 1.7 percent, reflecting a similar trend in Hoke County and the City of Raeford.

Cooper attributed the improvement to "strong law enforcement and tough sentences" imposed by the courts.

Statistics released by the State Bureau

of Investigation annually reflected a decrease in crimes under the administration of Hoke Sheriff Hubert Peterkin. Under the previous sheriff's administration some 1,433 total offenses were reported in 2000. Peterkin's administration experienced 1,413 total crimes in 2004, in spite of a population explosion of more than 5,000 people in Hoke, the second-fastest growing county in the state.

Peterkin expressed thanks to all of his staff for their efforts in helping reduce

crime in the county.

Burglaries were up though.

"Burglaries in our county that occur are a reflection of our population increase," Peterkin said. "Of course, they happen at night. Our larceny rate for break-ins has substantially decreased.

"I think we are doing really well in protecting the people of Hoke County with the resources we are working with right now," he said.

"I think our staff is doing an excellent

job to provide coverage to the community," he said.

"We hope to increase our number of patrol deputies next year. I want to thank the county commissioners for working closely with us on these challenges ahead."

This yearly state report also showed a substantial reduction in overall crime in the City of Raeford under the leadership of Raeford Police Chief Kevin Locklear and Assistant Chief of Police Greg Thomas.

(See CRIME RATE, page 5A)

Former Hoke High basketball standout safe after storm

Shawn Malloy, a student at UNO, makes it back to Raeford with fiancée, her daughter

BY PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor



Shawn Malloy's fiancée's car ran out of gas outside of Jackson, Mississippi. Nichole Mills and her four-year-old daughter Marchee rode with Malloy for 35 miles to buy gas then they went back to get Mills' vehicle. After Malloy gassed up his car, they had a couple of bucks left for dollar hamburgers. Thus fortified, they drove all the way to Atlanta to a friend's house.

And so the trio left the nightmare of

Hurricane Katrina behind them.

Malloy, 21, is the Hoke High basketball standout who earned a scholarship to attend the University of New Orleans. He began his senior year there August 22, but he won't be finishing the year. He thinks the campus, which is near the Lake Pontchartrain levee that burst, is under water.

"It was a very bad experience," Malloy said of the four days he, Mills and Marchee spent in a hotel in New Orleans before they were able to escape the city. But, he knows how lucky the three of them were to have

been in a safe structure and were able to leave in their own vehicles that had been stowed on a parking deck.

When Katrina, with winds of 136 miles per hour, hit the Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana coasts Sunday morning, August 28, Malloy, Mills and the little girl were on the 21st floor of the Wyndham Canal Place Hotel. Mills, a native of Portland, Oregon who had graduated from the university a year earlier, worked at the hotel. Concerned that the windows (See MALLOY, page 7A)

Strickland to seek help in Washington

Superintendent wants federal help educating military students

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke County School Superintendent Allen Strickland will soon be soliciting the top military brass and political leaders in Washington, D.C. for more financial aid for Hoke students.

Strickland has been invited by the U.S. Army to visit Washington, D.C. October 20-21 to discuss educating military students. He will address challenges associated with the influx of military students,

who will be relocating at Fort Bragg with their families, due to the military installation's expansion and the base realignment process. A substantial percentage of the new students will enroll in Hoke and surrounding counties such as Cumberland.

"We are going up there, hoping we may receive some help," Strickland said. "It is an honor to participate in the conference. Our military enrollment continues to increase.

"I will also be conferring with (See STRICKLAND, page 6A)

This Week



Family, Navy feel loss of Noah Hendrix

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State trooper nabs escapee

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Bucks fall to Rams

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Rep. Pierce talks about the lottery

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News

Other stuff

BY KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

About the time we were heading to bed Friday night, sirens passed the house. I dismissed them, but my wife said she felt a disturbance in the force, an uneasy feeling that only mothers seem to get.

Because our answering machine picks up on the fourth ring, we are somewhat immune to middle-of-the-night calls from dialers of wrong numbers, but sometimes

there's a delay between the leaving and receiving of an important message.

So when the call came my wife awoke to hear a message being left.

It was Monica, a 14-year old friend of the family. "Melissa was hit by a car. Call us," she said.

My wife woke me up. It was 12:30. I quickly went to the den and listened. Monica's tone and the brevity of the message worried me. A child could not be struck by (See OTHER STUFF, page 3A)