

The News-Journal

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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\$100 million ethanol plant still on track

Clears environmental regulatory hurdles, waiting on improvements to railroad

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke County will soon be feeding more than livestock with corn crops. It will be fueling vehicles on the East Coast with ethanol, an alternative fuel source made from corn, according to Jack

Carlisle, CEO and co-founder of Clean Burn Fuels, LLC based in Cary.

"Ethanol converted from corn is cheaper and not harmful to the environment like oil-gasoline products," Carlisle said. "We are still on track to build a \$100 million ethanol plant in Hoke."

"The ethanol industry can only get

bigger and bigger as supplies of petroleum decrease and costs increase. We just have a few details to work out with railroad transportation before the final contracts are signed with Hoke officials."

A final hurdle for state approval of the local plant was recently cleared. Design plans for the plant passed the air quality

standards set forth by the N.C. Department of Environmental and Natural Resources, according to Hoke officials.

This assurance came after an announcement this month that a \$150 million ethanol plant would be constructed in rural Aurora, NC in Beaufort County, where 74 jobs will be provided.

Carlisle said Hoke's ethanol deal is not associated with the Aurora plant, and he has no financial interest in the eastern North Carolina site. Hoke's and Aurora's ethanol operations would represent the first ones to be constructed on the East Coast.

(See ETHANOL, page 4A)

Construction needs, schools top stories

2005 saw Hoke dealing with growth

BY PAT ALLEN WILSON
AND VICTORIANA SUMMERS

It took 10 years for Hoke Schools to win a class action victory in the courts for more financing from the state for education.

The Supreme Court ruling in Leandro vs. North Carolina this year established the right of every child in the state to "the equal opportunity to receive a sound basic education." That ruling underlined the responsibility of the state to ensure that end.

Yet 2005 ends with the students of Hoke seeing few identifiable results from the ruling as the needed finances are slow in coming. A shortage of teachers continues in spite of programs designed to bring more qualified teachers into the system. In addition, Hoke schools are looking at an influx

of students from military families relocating to Fort Bragg and are attempting to find room for them in the system.

That is why The News-Journal has identified the needs of the schools as the top story of 2005.

Coming in as close seconds are the "aggressive building mode" of the county and the renovation of downtown Raeford.

Responding to pressure from state officials, the county hashed out plans to expand the jail at a cost of \$7 million. The sheriff's office will move from its cramped quarters behind the courthouse to a renovated health center on Central Avenue. Meanwhile, construction of a new \$2.8 million health center on Palmer Street is underway and expected to be completed in February. County commissioners have also made preliminary plans for a new recreation center at \$2 million and a new agriculture center that is expected to cost \$4 million. Also in the plans are a new animal shelter.

Main Street is still partially torn up as streetscape plans for a new look for downtown are underway. After years of efforts to save the old and abandoned Raeford Hotel, the six-story historic building fell to the wrecking ball in early May and a vacant lot is left — available for development — in its place.

(See TOP STORIES, page 3A)



Local firefighters extinguish a blaze on Ranch Road last Thursday that destroyed the home of Grady and Willie Ann Lee.

Fire steals Christmas from West Hoke couple

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

An afternoon house fire initially reported as a woods fire destroyed the home of senior citizens Grady Lee Jr. and his wife, Willie Ann Lee, on Ranch Road

just three days before Christmas, according to Major Freddy Johnson, Hoke fire marshal.

"Mr. and Mrs. Lee lost everything last Thursday, and they were understandably upset," Johnson said. "This is a terrible thing to happen just before Christmas.

"Fortunately, they were not at home at the time of the blaze. The home is a total loss."

Firemen from North Raeford, Hillcrest, Pinehill, and West Hoke fire departments fought the severe fire aggressively and were initially concerned that the owners might

have been trapped inside.

A large plume of smoke could be seen for at least three miles. The fire swept through the doublewide mobile home, disintegrating walls and leaving only a skeleton of the structure.

(See FIRE, page 3A)

Wrecks over holiday leave two dead, others in critical condition

BY PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

"Not for an instant" did Sean Davies think of his own safety as he pulled a man from a burning vehicle on Christmas Eve. "I was doing my job," the Hillcrest firefighter said.

Davies was on the scene of a traffic accident that left one dead and another critically injured. It was one of two traffic fatalities that occurred shortly before the

Christmas holiday. The Highway Patrol reported 12 vehicle accidents in Hoke from December 19 to the 25th. Most were serious, they said.

The Christmas Eve crash involved a vehicle whose driver was leaving the scene of a hit and run, Trooper J.D. Hoover reported. A 1999 Hyundai crashed less than a minute after it crossed the centerline on Scurlock School Road and sideswiped another vehicle.

As the Hyundai rounded the

curve, it went onto the right shoulder and the driver lost control, his car sliding sideways into a tree and bursting into flames.

Davies and Chief Michael Scott and Captain Derek Baker, volunteers at the nearby Hillcrest Fire Department, were on the scene immediately after the call came in. They found the car wrapped around a tree, "blowing up with exploding tires," according to Davies.

(See ACCIDENTS, page 4A)



The scene where one man died and another is in critical condition after their vehicle hit a tree and burst into flames.

Schools prepare for influx of kids

Huts may be used to avoid or delay building schools

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Projections of 8,000 military families relocating to Fort Bragg during the next five years and 15,000 moving into the region within 10 years have Hoke's Board of Education and commissioners wrestling with options to handle the predicted influx of students in Hoke schools.

This growth will occur because of the recent Base

Realignment and Closings (BRAC) plan that will expand the population of troops based at Fort Bragg, and encompass Pope Air Force Base too, according to Hoke school superintendent Allen Strickland.

It's almost a crisis, and school board members plan to pass next year's school budget in February — an unprecedented three months in advance. Commission Chairman Bobby Wright has asked the school

board to analyze whether modular classrooms might be the best route instead of permanent brick and mortar school buildings in the future.

The savings could be substantial, according to Brown Hendrix Jr., Hoke schools' facilities and maintenance director. Hendrix said modulars cost 50 cents on the dollar with a lifetime of 40 to 50 years compared to the more expensive (See SCHOOLS, page 6A)

This Week



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News

Other stuff

BY KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

Male's guide to cooking collards
(Feeds 20 — or 10 twice — with enough leftovers to store in a cereal bowl in the fridge for a week)

Grow, or go to Home Food and buy, 4 large heads of collards.

Also grow or buy a ham bone. And you might as well get some beer while you're at it.

Place collards only — not the ham bone or beer — in washing machine, remembering to remove any women's cloths that you

don't want stained green.

But first, cut (or tear if you're really many) the leaves off the stalks discarding the stems. If you don't, the washing machine will.

Set on collard cycle, or if you're in an area of the country that is not in the south and your washing machine doesn't have a collard cycle, set on gentle wash with at least two rinsings.

Add half the usual bleach. Ha, just kidding. Wanted to see if you're paying attention.

If you are using this as a recipe and (See OTHER STUFF, page 6A)