

# The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

75¢

No. 42 Vol. 100

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, January 4, 2006

## Hoke third most dangerous county to drive in

### Treacherous weather, careless driving, not alcohol cited most often in fatal crashes

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Hoke County has sustained notoriety for the third, consecutive year as one of the most dangerous counties to drive in.

According to AAA Carolinas Auto-

mobile Club, Hoke ranked in the top three as one in 2004 in which a motorist had the "greatest chance" of being in a crash per mile traveled. Rural Bertie County in eastern North Carolina was named most dangerous followed by Hertford County in second. Bertie and Hertford placed for the first time in this hazard-

ous category. Columbus County ranked fourth followed by Harnett County in fifth place.

However, statistics also released by the N.C. Highway Patrol office in Aberdeen last week indicated Hoke's fatality rate decreased slightly from 14 killed on roadways in 2004 to 13 in 2005. Sgt.

Tyrone Ross of the Highway Patrol released this data.

In spite of recent widening of shoulders on U.S. 401 and Calloway Road, extra traffic lights, stop-sign warnings and turn lanes installed, the rural roads of Hoke are still taking a fatal toll. Ross said the majority of Hoke's wrecks in

2005 resulted from motorists experiencing treacherous weather conditions or driving carelessly or recklessly.

"None of these fatal accidents were listed as a result of alcohol use," Ross said. "This was based on our toxicology reports. A lot of factors enter into the cause (See ACCIDENTS, page 7A)

## Computerized dispatching OK'd

### Kiss those scanners goodbye

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Hoke commissioners last night approved a new computerized dispatching system, ensuring there will soon be a lot of "dead air" at the local command center and on scanners monitored by residents across the county.

Future emergency calls will be directly transmitted via a wireless computer system to law enforcement, rescue and fire personnel rather than by "audible" radio, according to E-9-1-1 communications director Jimmy Stewart.

However, FirstHealth of the Carolinas medics will not be on the system unless FirstHealth is willing to pay for the software and computers required to operate it.

"Our emergency calls have

grown ten percent per year," Stewart said of demand for services. "In ten years, we have doubled our responses.

"It would take a load off our dispatching for routine stuff which is becoming more of a burden. We could attend to more hot calls.

"Right now, criminals can figure out where everything is at in the county."

Rather like a military stealth bomber evading radar detection by an enemy, the mobile dispatch system would prevent criminals from intercepting the location and nature of an emergency call. Mobile data terminals (MDTs) capability would also prevent criminals from monitoring the activities of the Hoke Sheriff's Office when a crime or drug bust may be in progress.

According to E-9-1-1 statistics, Hoke communications handled 65,000 calls requesting emergency service from January 1 to December 30, 2005 that were processed via radio transmissions.

Other activities such as warrant information and record keeping is currently tying up the dispatch system. With MDT, telecommunications could inform law officers in their vehicles more efficiently (See DISPATCH, page 5A)



Tim Thacker, with a plane similar to the one in which he crashed in Florida two days before Christmas.

## Local pilot crash-lands in Florida orange grove

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Raeford charter pilot Tim Thacker feels like a Christmas miracle, surviving without serious injuries from a crash-landing in a Florida orange grove.

"This is not going to be good," Thacker said his last thought was before crash landing on

December 23, feeling his plane flip tail-over-nose with him still in the cockpit. "I knew it was not going to be nice. It was a shot in the dark for me to land safely. I braced myself for the worst, but I remained conscious after the plane lost power, and I landed.

"I said to myself, 'this is really going to hurt,' but I did not want to think about dying," he said.

"I was able to climb out of a window after turning off the engine so it would not explode. I know I was a pretty lucky guy."

Thacker — who also did not strike any homes, motorists or pedestrians said he has done a lot of soul-searching about the hereafter and life since returning to North Carolina. Employed by a private charter service in Raleigh, the

42-year-old Thacker was on his way to fly skydivers at a national collegiate parachuting event in Lake Wales, Florida at the time of the fluke accident.

"My children, 12-year-old Allie and 14-year-old Morgan, were supposed to have been flying with me," the divorced Thacker said. "Morgan had some sort of (See CRASH, page 7A)

## Leaders confident ethanol plant will get needed state, federal funds

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Jack Carlisle, founder of Clean Burn Fuels, LLC toured the Hoke County Regional Industrial Park near Dundarrach off N.C. 20 last week, obtaining a water sample from nearby neighbor Edgar Patterson on Arabia Road.

"We are committed to establish our plant in Hoke," Carlisle said.

Not required to do so by the state, Carlisle took the

water sample merely for commercial purposes. He said it will determine what mix in the water can be converted to sugar as the corn is converted to ethanol. Carlisle is planning the \$100 million plant that will serve as a manufacturer of an alternative fuel source instead of gasoline.

"No water is the same," Carlisle said. "If the water is right at the site, it could speed up the process for the corn to be converted more efficiently.

"We just need to know what

chemical compounds are in the water around the site for the plant so we will know what formula we will need to mix the water."

Informally meeting Carlisle at the site, Hoke commissioner Charles V. Daniels showed Carlisle around the neighborhood, introducing him to Patterson. Daniels, like Carlisle, is discussing potential funding on the state level on behalf of the Hoke board of commissioners.

"A lot of money has been (See ETHANOL, page 6A)



Jack Carlisle, founder of Clean Burn Fuels, at the ethanol plant site.

## Sports center ready to open doors

### Indoor soccer, batting cage, rock climbing featured

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

When someone wants to kick off a soccer game in Hoke County in February, it won't matter if there is snow on the ground, according to George Fredericks, co-owner of the new indoor Sandhills Sports Center in western Hoke.

Fredericks said SSC would provide athletic activities and recreation for youth and adults in Hoke

and surrounding counties. The company will also enhance county sporting opportunities that may be currently lacking in Hoke's Parks and Recreation department, he added.

"We have skylights throughout the building to bring the feeling of the outdoors in for our athletes in a climate-controlled environment," Fredericks said. "We have an authentic-looking rock-climbing wall that soars 30 feet to

scale. It even has the texture of rock.

"We also will offer an extensive sporting goods equipment center with special items for sale," he said.

"In our second phase, we will have outside fields for tennis, youth football, cheerleading camps and volleyball."

Thus, two years after Fredericks announced that SSC would be opening the (See SPORTS, page 5A)

### This Week



Rockfish's Clark runs for Senate page 1B

The year's best and worst page 3A

Sixth arrest made in teen's death page 7A

### Index

Birth	2B
Business/Farm	6A
Calendar	3B
Classifieds	3B, 5B
Deaths	8A
Editorials	2A
Engagements	2B
Legals	4B
Religion	2B
School menus	6B
Socials	2B
Sports	4A
Weddings	2B

We're on the web at  
www.thenews-journal.com  
Read by 3,000 each week

## The News-Journal

News Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD  
Publisher

New Years Day I got up and re-read an article in *The Sun* entitled "Secrets of Pronoia - How the World is Conspiring to Shower You With Blessings." It's not really an article on positive thinking so much as an exercise in acknowledging that most everything in our lives goes right.

Your blood flows, the article says, the air is just the right mixture of gases for our lungs, the electricity in our houses flow with a flick of the switch, our pillows are soft, our water is clean, we use machines

people now long dead worked their whole lives to perfect, even our hygiene products have been carefully tested for safety.

So why do we concentrate on the things that go awful?

"Let's say it's now 9:30 a.m. You've been awake for two hours, and a hundred things have already gone right for you. If three of those hundred things had not gone right — your toaster was broken, the hot water wasn't hot enough, there was a stain on the pants you wanted to wear — you might feel that the universe was (See OTHER STUFF, page 8A)