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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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City, County join forces to get jobs

Incentives worth \$100,000 offered up if state helps bring 65 Burlington jobs

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

In a tandem effort to prevent 65 jobs being courted by another state or county, Hoke commissioners and Raeford city council have shown "solid" financial support for Burlington Industries to expand its

Raeford plant, according to Hoke commissioner Charles V. Daniels.

"This would partially bail out Burlington from a shutdown planned in its Hurt, Virginia plant and boost economic prosperity in Hoke," Daniels said of the recent proposals.

Daniels also indicated most of the

500 jobs currently maintained at the Virginia plant would be transferred to the weaving plant in Burlington, NC. The dye and finishing portion, requiring 65 workers, could be moved to Raeford in early 2007.

"None of this is a done deal, but our state seems to be on top

of things," Daniels, who worked at Burlington for 23 years, said. "I started out sweeping floors at Burlington and worked my way up to management.

"Burlington has been good to Hoke County, and they have been struggling," he said.

"We want to keep them here, and help them with their continued success. I was on board when Burlington was open seven days a week with 2,500 employees."

Daniels said Burlington has a "tremendous" track record that equals (See **JOBS**, page 3A)

SAT scores disappoint educators

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Declining scores at Hoke County High on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) are disappointing for 2005-06, with a drop of six points in reading and math, but the new school administration has hopes test scores will improve for next year, according to Dr. Lora Hodges. Hoke assistant school superintendent of curriculum.

With 48.1 percent of students taking the SAT in Hoke, the average score this year was 864 compared to 870 in 2004-05. Hoke High students scored an average 439 in math and 425 in reading. A third component, writing, was added this year, with local students averaging 417. However, Hodges said, since writing is so new, many (See **SAT**, page 6A)



An overwrought Debra Purcell, the mother of Francesca, is consoled by Hoke sheriff Hubert Peterkin after she learned her daughter is safe. Below, searchers wrap it up.



Teen found safe after tense search

For almost 24 hours, hundreds comb woods for diabetic girl

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Singing praises to God and of Hoke Sheriff Hubert Peterkin and volunteers, the Rev. Bishop Larry Beatty, pastor of Big and Little Faith Temple Church, said his congregation's prayers were answered after lost teen Francesca Melvin was found safe Monday. She was lost almost 24-hours after she disappeared during a Sunday worship service.

Commissioner James Leach, an ordained minister, told county commissioners at their Monday morning meeting of the news Melvin was safe. Leach echoed Beatty's praises.

"I am proud of the Hoke Sheriff's Office, rescue personnel and all volunteers," Leach said. "It was a job well done."

"People in Hoke County stuck together in this time of need and (See **SAFE**, page 3A)



Bishop Larry Beatty: "The brush was a high as my head out there."

This Week



Local teen rides champion horse page 5A

Write-in sheriff's candidate profiled page 3A

County enhances pay scale for new hires page 7A

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Congressman Hayes, \$200,000 check welcomed

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The bustling of road work on Main Street formed the backdrop for a visit by Congressman Robin Hayes, who congratulated members of the Raeford Downtown Redevelopment Commission for the city's new streetscape Friday. Hayes brought a check for \$200,000 for the project, and was joined by almost 50 well-wishers at the ceremony.

Celebrating the arrival of Hayes at City Hall, Raeford Mayor John K. McNeill welcomed guests and citizens to the event. Follow-

ing remarks, the group strolled downtown to the new Chatterbox restaurant for lunch.

"I love the smell of tar in the morning - especially on Main Street, Raeford," McNeill said of the strong aroma. "We can see the light at the end of the tunnel, and everything is coming to fruition."

Local realtor Steve Connell, chairman of the redevelopment commission, recognized elected officials after Raeford city councilman Bobby Conoly presented the invocation.

"It is a beautiful day," an ex-

cited Connell said. "We are truly achieving progress in making our dream a reality."

"Thanks to the volunteers giving of themselves with their time and talents."

Connell said it was great to see the downtown streetscape taking shape, with the most recent phase of the scraping off old pavement and repaving to come.

"We are almost finished," Connell said. "I think this is a wonderful thing for the town."

"Things are looking better, and Robin Hayes has been (See **DOWNTOWN**, page 7A)



House of Raeford's Gene Shelnett, Downtown ambassador Mary Archie McNeill and Congressman Robin Hayes enjoy the celebration.

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News Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

Mike McNeill walked into the office this afternoon with his head so red he looked like he had either been slapped about the face by an angry woman or had gotten too close to a nuclear reactor. He looked like Arthur Carlson on WKRP when he was campaigning for office and allowed a local TV station to do his makeup before a televised debate. I didn't mention it, but I did

plot to make fun of him here. "So, whatcha been up to?" I asked instead, figuring there had to be a good story.

"Just got back from nine days on a sailboat," he said. "Came from the tip of Maryland all the way through Chesapeake Bay and the Dismal Swamp."

Seems he and Smoky McMillan rented a car, went up to Havre de Grace, Maryland, purchased a (See **OTHER STUFF**, page 7A)



401 wreck scene
Motorcyclist Buzzy Best of Gibson, was airlifted to a Chapel Hill hospital after colliding with a pickup driven by Timothy Craig, 20, of Hope Mills Tuesday and landing on a jeep driven by Sheila Ritchie of Raeford. (Story, page 6A)