# The News-Journal

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, May 30, 2007

# County plans to hold line on tax rate Board to reorganize some departments, adjust staffing, review school budget

**BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS** Staff writer

In a effort to stave off a tax increase for the coming year, the Hoke board of commislast evening.

County Manager Mike Wood said things are looking mant there will be no tax

down to \$30.2 million after for next year, as was the fear to reduce about another one- is held to approve the final manner: "We are not putting shaving off another \$400,000 of some board members hundred-thousand dollars off budget." earlier.

"The board is now adapositive. He said the board increase for Hoke citizens," sioners knocked the budget does not foresee a tax increase Wood said. "We only need

the budget to be where we

need to be. "We anticipate one more budget session will be re-

Commissioners appeared cooperative and in high spirits. At one point, Hoke commission vice chairman Tony quired before a public hearing Hunt said in a conservative in; we are taking out."

Wood quipped: "This is a take-out session. I have made some cuts that would take off the four cent tax."

(See BUDGET, page 4A)







### Kids ring Memorial Day in General Horst makes

appearance at school BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS Staff writer

Men and women in military uniform who sacrificed their lives to preserve liberty and the American way of life were honored by millions on Memorial Day from sea to shining sea.

In Hoke County, the commemoration began early on Thursday morning as Rockfish Hoke Elementary students hosted the second annual military appreciation day. A special visit was enjoyed from U.S. Army Brigadier General Karl R. Horst, deputy-commanding general of the XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg. Putting children at ease, Horst toured the school's campus, and (See MEMORIAL, page 8A)

Students, parents and teachers gaze skyward to view the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division All American Freefall Team landing at Rockfish Hoke Elementary; a class spells out "Memorial Day."

#### This Week

# Teen arrested in murder of Fayetteville man



Wagon Train returns to Hoke page 1B

Foundation awards grants page 6B

**Arsonist torches** house where rape occurred page 5A

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BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS Staff writer

Hoke County Schools administrators expressed dismay yesterday that one of their students may be implicated in the murder conspiracy of Fayetteville teen Jourdhan Phillips. The 18-year-old was shot in a drive-by chase on May 6 on Morganton Road in Fayetteville.

A student at Hoke County High, 17-year-old Keonte

MacDonald

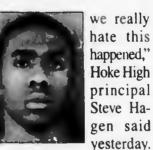
BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS

Staff writer

Devon Purcell was arrested off campus last Thursday on homicide allegations. Purcell had continued to attend school at Hoke High for more than two weeks since Phillips was slain.

A junior, Purcell is charged with first-degree murder, conspiracy to commit firstdegree murder, discharging a weapon into an occupied property and first-degree attempted murder.

"We love our students, and



Purcell "We were

shocked of the news that a student was arrested.

"Of course, innocent until proven guilty," he said. "We did not have any idea

a student was involved in a

murder investigation until we read of his arrest."

According to Hagen, Purcell had no previous issues on campus with any sort of school violence.

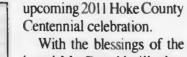
"Keonte Purcell was in my office last week with our school superintendent, Dr. Freddie Williamson," Hagen said. "He was trying to validate some of the days he might not have been in school. I guess he was being questioned by the police.

"We counseled him on making the right choices with his life and to think before he acts."

Hagen said he did not know of a particular policy that covered whether Purcell would be allowed to return to school if he was released on bond.

"I am pretty sure he could not come back to school, but that decision would have to be addressed by Dr. William-(See MURDER, page 6A)

## Hoke centennial plans set in motion



board, MacDonald will select from four to five additional volunteers to organize the county's marking of its onehundredth birthday. Mac-Donald foresees hundreds of participants in the final research and festivity phases of the centennial.

"I don't need a minute," MacDonald said in good humor to the board. "I need four years.

"I want to remind you in a little less than four years will be the centennial of Hoke County."

An enthused Hoke board of MacDonald urged the commissioners unanimously board's participation, promising it would become a appointed retired Hoke educator Lauchlin "Locke" Macsignificant event without re Donald as chairman of the (See 100 YEARS, page 5A)



Bystanders watch firemen extinguish a blaze on South Main Street Saturday afternoon. The vacant house was at the entrance to the old Raeford Lumber Yard.