

The News-Journal

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75¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, June 27, 2007

Firing of 6 sets off accusations, alarm

Three commissioners say it's to save money, two say it's racially motivated

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Voting 3-2, Hoke County Commissioners abruptly eliminated four positions — two of them department heads — Friday morning, setting off charges of racism, and raising questions about the legality of their methods.

After the \$3.5 million county budget was already balanced for 2007-08 and subsequently passed on Friday, the board came back at the same meeting and suddenly wiped out the positions of the Parks and Recreation director, the Risk Management manager, the code enforcement inspector and the customer service manager in Hoke Utilities.

The four employees removed are white, and were fired without reprimands or disciplinary actions on their records, according to commissioner Jean Powell. She voted against the budget recommendation introduced by commission chairman James A. Leach.

"It strikes me that the terminated positions involved, or those employees let go are

white," Powell said. "This is a sad day for Hoke County.

"I do think Hoke has a good representation in its employment from all races," she said.

"It is a shame that this appears racially motivated."

Powell, and commissioner Bobby Wright, (See *COUNTY FIRINGS*, page 5A)



David Cook stopped at Home Food Super Market Thursday for a banana, before continuing on his walk to Carolina Beach.



Jackson supporters appear at board meeting.

Parks & Rec. emergency meeting held

Director among those fired

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Parks and Recreation advisory board members, colleagues, coaches and parents are rallying behind Parks and Rec director David Jackson. Commission chairman James A. Leach, commission vice chairman Tony Hunt and commissioner Ellen McNeill, terminated his position unexpectedly on Friday.

Hunt said after the board voted on the issue 3-2 on Friday that Jackson's position would remain vacant for at least one year.

Commissioners Jean Powell and Bobby Wright voted against what they deemed was the "firing" by the other three board members of Jackson without provocation or due process. Leach, Hunt and McNeill say the elimination of his position was merely cost cutting in nature.

An overflowing impassioned, but orderly, group of supporters spoke of Jackson's dedication at an emergency Parks and Rec meeting last night. The board unanimously voted to "keep" Jackson on board.

The advisory board voted to send chairman Hissa Epps as a representative for the group to Friday's budget session meeting and the regular Monday night commissioners' (See *PARKS & REC.*, page 7A)

This Week



Jenna Walters
finalist in talent
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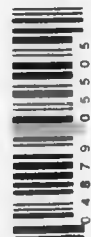
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Man's journey to health brings him through Hoke County

By KEN MACDONALD

Roughly a year ago, David Cook weighed 427 pounds. He could barely walk 10 feet, let alone take on the adventure that led him through Raeford last week.

Thursday, about 185 pounds lighter, he walked up Main Street

and reached the approximate halfway point on his trek from his hometown in Granite Quarry, N.C. to Carolina Beach, a distance of 220 miles.

"If you told me a month ago I'd do something like this I'd have laughed at you," he said upon reaching the office of The News-

Journal, where he took a break for about 15 minutes.

The 51 year-old Baptist minister, who holds a masters in church music and a doctorate in family ministry, struggled with weight issues all his life. He weighed 98 pounds in the first (See *JOURNEY*, page 4A)

Woman fighting for her life after attack in Scurlock

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A Hispanic woman is fighting for her life at the University of North Carolina-Hospitals at Chapel Hill after being stabbed while in her Scurlock home on Friday.

The suspected assailant of Jessica Perez was captured by the Hoke Sheriff's Office

after a countywide dragnet and subsequent chase.

Hoke sheriff Hubert Peterkin said barely one hour after Perez was apparently left for dead, Casimiro Solis Pacheco was apprehended while he was driving a get-away vehicle.

Pacheco is charged with attempted first-degree murder. He is currently being detained

at Hoke County Jail, under a \$1 million secured bond.

Hoke deputies responded to the emergency request concerning an assault on Friday.

Details were still sketchy



Pacheco

if the incident was one motivated by domestic violence, according to Peterkin.

"She is still alive," Peterkin said today. "Her condition is listed as critical, but we urge our community to pray for her recovery."

Perez was initially transported to Cape Fear Valley Hospital, where she received medical care prior to being

transferred to Chapel Hill's facility.

Perez and Pacheco resided together at 405 Chadwick Road, site of her stabbing.

"I want to thank my deputies and detectives for leaping immediately into action to find this suspect," Peterkin said. "I was very pleased that the suspect was captured (See *STABBING*, page 7A)

Hoke native Claudie Dial is Lumbee parade marshal

By KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

Milestones usually bring mixed emotions: your car passing 100,000 miles (pride, trepidation), you graduate (relief, apprehension), your first French kiss (joy, disgust). So it was when our oldest child turned 25 last week: he's finally grown and, as a teacher has a respectable job, but then if he's a quarter of a century old, where does that put us, his parents?

Curiously, I found it comforting. Twenty-

five is still young, I reasoned, and I'm only 25 times two. You could say I have been young twice.

Anyway, his twenty-fifth birthday was a milestone and we went out to dinner to celebrate.

There we were regaled with tales from his latest adventure — a visit to the music festival Bannaroo, and marveled at his plans — or thereof — for his next adventure, which commences today.

(See *OTHER STUFF*, page 8A)

The Lumbee Homecoming Festival, now more than 30 years old, continues in Robeson County with beauty pageants this weekend, and concludes July 7 with a parade, led by Hoke native and grand marshal Rev. Claudie Dial.

Dial, who now lives in Scotland County, is an evangelist who spent his life ministering all over the world.

He chartered the non-profit organization "Friends of the Son," which helps



Rev. Claudie Dial helps (See *MARSHAL*, page 7A)