

# The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

75¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

## Option on Hoke land is for Wal-Mart

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

A regional development company has entered a sales-option agreement to explore opening the first Wal-Mart store in Hoke County, according to property owners Duncan Lacy McNeill and brother William McNeill.

Their land is in the 4000 block of Fayetteville Road roughly across from East Hoke Middle School.

Because of confidentiality and preliminary discussions, the McNeill brothers declined to name the development firm involved in the venture.

"We have not received any moneys yet," Duncan McNeill said. "It is not a firm thing at all, but it would be a boon for Hoke County."

"I am satisfied - if the deal goes through - that it would put a lot of people to work in Hoke County."

"It would also be a great tax base for our

county," he said.

"A Wal-Mart would bring more retail revenue that would help with our school system."

Some county officials are cautiously optimistic that the potential transaction with Wal-Mart will be completed. The county has already approved enlarging some of the sewer lines currently serving Hoke Landing shopping plaza and East Hoke Middle School.

"We have a four-inch line for sewer right

now," the county official, who asked not to be named, said. "We have enough capacity for a Wal-Mart to be constructed, but the larger line would give us more capacity for other businesses that might accompany a Wal-Mart center or some other stores."

The McNeills indicated a contract was signed with the development firm in February. Feasibility studies, soil samples and site surveying remain if a store is to be built.

(See WAL-MART, page 4A)



After striking a truck in its path, this car hit a tree off US401.

## Wreck kills two

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

A young Raeford mother died when her vehicle collided with a tractor-trailer on July 5, and one of her four children - in a Chapel Hill hospital since the wreck - died Monday.

Twenty-one-year-old Ebony Starr Brown, of 107 Yadkin Trail, died at the scene after lapsing into unconsciousness in spite of a cooperative effort to save her, Pender said.

She had been driving toward Fayetteville on U.S. 401 with her four children when she struck a tractor-trailer.

Charges are pending against the truck's driver, Larry Francis Pitts of Salemburg, according to N.C. Trooper Eric Pender, investigating patrolman.

"He was at fault," Pender said. "She had the right-of-way."

"She tried to miss his vehicle as he crossed over her path."

"She was a good mother, and she was a very hard worker," an overwrought Cornelia Brown, mother of Ebony, said yesterday. "I am sorry." (See WRECK, page 5A)



## Freshman Success

It's almost back-to-school time for students at Hoke County High School, and freshmen are on campus this week getting ready. The orientation program gives them a taste of the real thing, lets them explore the campus and meet teachers, and introduces them to older students who can show them the ropes.

## This Week



Relay For Life  
tops \$80,000  
page 4A

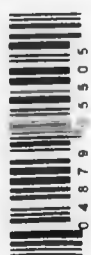
Proposed parking plan  
rankles most merchants  
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Two more arrested  
in Freeman murder  
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## Don Steed School on target for '08 completion

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

The roof is on. As the multi-million dollar Don Steed Elementary School edges closer

to completion, teachers and administrators are passing by to see the progress, according to Hoke schools project manager Brown Hendrix Jr.

Not even a rain shower on

Monday stopped the flow of construction currently underway on Philippi Church Road.

"This school will represent a facility where we have

installed a water sprinkler system for fire safety for the very first time," Hendrix said. "Parents will be proud that this facility will also furnish state-of-the-art technology for our students."

"We want them to have the best for helping with their educations. Our administration will provide the latest and greatest, with computer systems as up to date as possible."

"If our projections are accurate, we should be able to handle future student enrollment. But, a lot will depend on the BRAC influx of military families into our areas and how many homes are being sold."

Since the groundbreaking on a bitterly cold day in January in a fallow cornfield, construction on the project has continued undaunted (See SCHOOL, page 5A)

## Three file for council

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Three incumbents and one newcomer filed for four available city council seats Friday.

Incumbents Mary Neal King, the first female to serve on the council, Robert L. (Bobby) Conoly and John Jordan filed for one of the three seats they currently hold. With their seats at large, the trio would automatically be nominee-elects if no one else files for the three seats. However, if they face competition in the upcoming November election, winners will be chosen according to

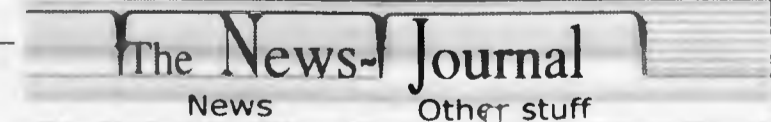
the highest number of votes. Filing for the unexpired, four-year term of the late Buddy Blue, which continues for two more years, is newcomer Shelley Wilburn.

Blue's seat is currently held by veteran councilman Benny McLeod, who returned to fulfill Blue's term after he died one day prior to taking office. Had Blue joined the city council, he would have been distinguished as the first Republican to serve on the local council.

Wilburn does not compete against King, Conoly or Jordan for the four-year terms they hold. Wilburn, if unchallenged, (See COUNCIL, page 8A)



Brown Hendrix says Steed Elementary will be a state-of-the-art school.



By KEN MACDONALD  
Publisher

Spencer is a rising high school senior from Raleigh, and you can tell it's him, because after last Thursday he has a giant "S" on his arm, branded there by a friend who used a piece of red-hot rebar heated on a charcoal grill.

Spencer taught me something. That there are youth groups out there whose collective IQ is much lower even than the one I work with.

I had gone back to Mexico so that Monica, our church's 15-year-old bilingual shining star, could help translate for a group that was so large it had to be divided into four, a problem since there weren't enough translators on staff at the hosting organization to handle them all. Rounding out our party was Glenda "Grandma" Lester.

Spencer was in the group of 50 youth his age with whom we lived for a week. They shared with us their food, transportation (See OTHER STUFF, page 8A)