

The News-Journal

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Wednesday, August 22, 2007

Ethanol plant clears final hurdle

A \$35 million loan for Hoke County's ethanol plant is official. It's also apparently the last hurdle that had to be cleared before Clean Burn Fuels could begin construction in southeastern Hoke County.

Congressman Robin Hayes (NC-8) announced Tuesday that the county will receive a loan through the Rural Business Enterprise Pro-

gram from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Program.

"This new ethanol plant represents economic development for Hoke County, a new market for North Carolina farmers, and greater energy independence for our nation," Hayes said. "This loan guarantee will provide funding to help make

this facility a reality and bring North Carolina into serious alternative fuel production."

Clean Burn Fuels says it will produce 60 million gallons of ethanol per year. If construction begins next month as planned, it will be the only ethanol plant between New York and Georgia.

The project will provide en-

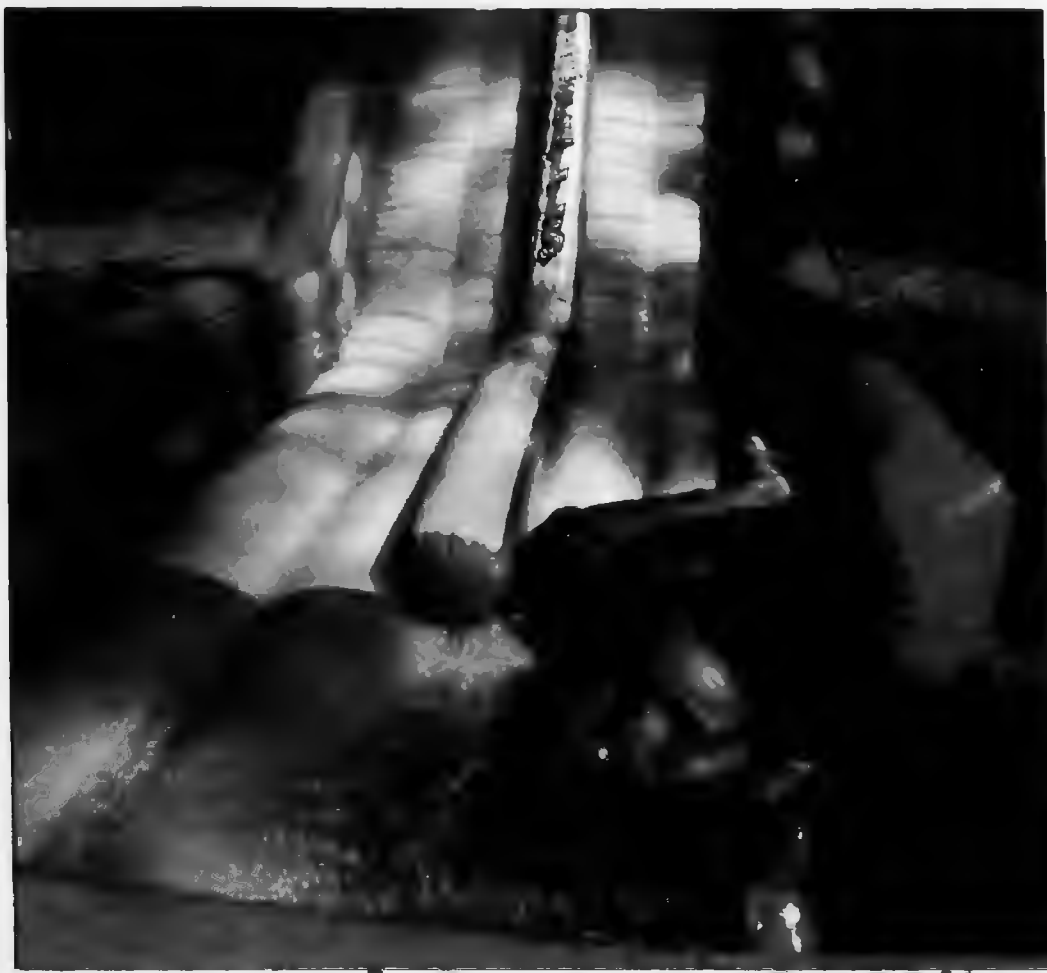
vironmental benefits because it reduces green house emissions, Hayes said.

The Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program is designed to help businesses in rural areas. The 9006 Program is designed to support development of alternative fuel, energy production and efficiency. Cape Fear Farm Credit and other

participating financial institutions are partnering with Clean Burn Fuel and USDA-Rural Development.

USDA-Rural Development will be guaranteeing \$35 million of the anticipated total project cost of \$110 million.

"We are excited that USDA Rural Development is able to provide (See ETHANOL, page 4A)



Reading is fun

And so are some other things at the library. Just ask seven-year-old Rodney Darrett (left) who emerges from a watery slide as a friend dives in, and another (right photo) ends his run off balance Tuesday. The slide was part of a fun day at the Hoke Library, held to celebrate the end of the summer reading program, which drew 500 children since June.



Smith listens to testimony.

Smith guilty Faces possible death sentence

BY JASON BECK
Staff Writer

As Kelvin Smith walked into the courtroom yesterday dressed in neatly-pressed khaki pants and a tie, he looked like any other 25-year-old. The clanking sound of the shackles around his feet told everyone he was a convicted murderer.

Smith was found guilty this week of 1st degree murder, conspiracy and robbery with a dangerous weapon in the shooting death of 23-year-old April Pate. Now, the Lumberton man faces a possible death sentence.

Pate was shot at her home two years ago on January 15. Jurors found Smith guilty of pulling the trigger after co-defendant Tony Locklear testified against him.

Yesterday, the defense tried to paint a softer picture of (See GUILTY, page 4A)

Triathlon new this year to Festival

BY LESLEY COVINGTON
Intern

The time approaches for Hoke County to acknowledge one of its greatest resources, the turkey.

The N.C. Turkey Festival is set for Sep. 8-16.

This year's theme for the 23rd annual festival is 'Struttin' in the Park.'

About 50,000 people attend the festival each year, according to Executive Director William Daniels.

The festival began in 1984. It was originally (See FESTIVAL, page 8A)

This Week



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Drought threatens livestock page 2B

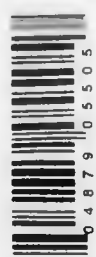
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County declares intent to pick new ambulance service provider

BY JASON BECK
Staff Writer

The Hoke County Commissioners voted 4-1 in favor of a new EMS provider Monday night, against the wishes of the county's director of emergency services.

American Medical Response, one of the largest

providers in the country, will become the area's new ambulance service, pending contract approval. Hoke County has outsourced EMS service since it took control of local rescue squads in 1983.

The county's contract with long-time provider First Health was terminated during last month's meeting.

American Medical bid at just over \$615,000 a year.

Jimmy Stewart, the county's EMS director, opposed AMR's offer, since it provided a scaled down version of the plan he recommended to the board.

"I could have asked for the world, but what I asked for is what I thought we

needed," Stewart said during the meeting. "If their budget doesn't include all that, then we are not comparing apples to apples."

Stewart recommended the addition of a training officer, an off-truck shift supervisor and a full-time quick response vehicle — none of which (See CONTRACT, page 3A)

Drought now reaching critical stage

BY JASON BECK
Staff Writer

Hoke County is in the midst of one of the worst droughts in recent memory and area farmers are taking a beating. According to one area farmer, nearly half of every crop is a total loss.

The dry weather has also caused fires in neighboring Robeson County and led to water restrictions across the region.

"We are probably in a

critical drought at this point in time," said Randy Wood, an agent with the Hoke County Agricultural Extension. "We have been in a drought all summer and it seems to have got worse as the summer went along."

Earl Hendrix has been farming cotton, soybeans and tobacco since 1952. He said this year's dry spell is among the worst he has ever witnessed.

"There aren't many like (See DROUGHT, page 5A)

News-Journal has new reporter

The News-Journal has a new reporter. He is Jason Beck, formerly a reporter for the Daily Record in Dunn, and then editor of the Daily Record's weekly Angier Independent.

Beck is a 2005 graduate of Campbell University where he attended on a Presidential Scholarship, and was Sophomore Class representative.

A native of Thomasville he was homeschooled.

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Gary Hendrix in a drought-stricken cotton field.