

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

75¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, September 10, 2008

School board says, 'bring plaque back'

Second sign will go up, all will be forgiven if Leach returns carted off plaque

BY JASON BECK
Staff Writer

The plaque removed from the new Don Steed Elementary School by James Leach, the chairman of the Hoke commissioners, may be returned to the wall, thanks to a decision last night by the board of education.

However, space will be made for an addi-

tional plaque, calming Leach's concerns.

Last month Leach went on his own to the Steed School and directed Utilities Director Dennis Baxley to remove a bronze plaque, which featured the names of the board of commissioners in power when grant money was secured for the school. The names of current board members Tony Hunt and Ellen McNeill were missing and Leach wasn't listed as chair-

man, because at the time he wasn't.

Since then the incident has turned scandal.

The school and all of its contents are owned by the board of education, and the \$822 plaque was paid for out of money given to the school system from a bond referendum.

After the first plaque went missing, the board of education also removed a second

plaque honoring the school board, pending further review.

Last night, the school board took its stance on the issue. After nearly two hours of discussion in closed session, Attorney Nick Sojka had written a resolution.

"I offer for the board's consideration the adoption of a resolution which affirms the (See **PLAQUE**, page 6A)

Hannah brings flooding

More than 40 spend night in a shelter

BY JASON BECK
Staff Writer

Tropical Storm Hanna blew into Hoke County over the weekend leaving yards flooded and minor damage to the area.

The storm, which killed more than 60 across the Caribbean as a category one hurricane, made landfall near the South Carolina state line at about 3 a.m. Saturday. Despite sustained winds of 70 mph and gusts even higher, the Raeford area was spared the brunt of the storm's fury.

However, nearly six inches of rain forced many streams (See **HANNAH**, page 6A)



Clockwise from top: Young Matthew "fishes" from the deck of his grandfather Greg Inman's flooded house on Bethel Rd.; John Leandro's house at Donaldson Ave. and Patterson St.; Lantern Lane Saturday morning. (MacDonald photos)

This Week



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Wrecks in bad weather kill one, injure another

BY JASON BECK
Staff Writer

Wet weather over the weekend caused a pair of accidents that left one Hoke County woman dead and another injured.

The first crash took place on Gainey Road at about 3:30 Friday, claiming the life the driver.

Ellen Riggins, 31, of 1691 Gainey Road, was killed in the single car wreck only

about a mile from her home. According to the North Carolina Highway Patrol, Riggins' 1999 GMC sport utility vehicle crashed into a ditch on the rain soaked highway.

"She ran off the road to

the right, hit a ditch and overturned," said Trooper D. P. Barber, "She wasn't wearing that seatbelt."

A child, who was a passenger in the car, survived the crash with only minor

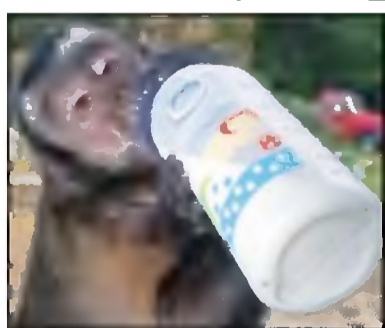
injuries.

Barber said the accident report faults Riggins for exceeding a safe speed in weather conditions that were listed as cloudy and rainy.

(See **WRECKS**, page 5A)

Monkey implicated in house fire, but owner exonerates him

BY JASON BECK
Staff Writer



If he did, Magoo didn't mean to.

When firemen arrived to battle a house fire Sunday they got a surprise—a monkey named Magoo, who may have even accidentally started the blaze.

Firefighters from the Pinehill Fire Department responded to a blaze at 3795 Army Road, and couldn't help but notice the animal hollering in the trees.

'Magoo,' a Capuchin Monkey, is apparently a service animal for the home's owner Susan Thomas. When fire crews arrived at the home, situated in the woods off a narrow dirt road, both Thomas and the animal had escaped the already engulfed structure.

It was then Pinehill Fire Chief Billy Williams got the surprise of his career.

"When we got there, (Thomas) brother came over to me and was telling me what happened... he felt the monkey started it," Williams said. "This lady's brother said the monkey... opened something in the house... He opened a gas can or something."

A spark may have ignited the gas, starting the fire. Confusion and (See **MONKEY**, page 5A)

County gets \$800k for radios

BY JASON BECK
Staff Writer

Hoke County has received a grant worth more than \$800,000 to replace emergency workers' aging radio system.

Congressman Robin Hayes office announced the grant's approval last

week. The money comes from the Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grants program set up after the terrorist attacks of September 11.

The \$803,943 grant requires a 10 percent match from the county, which has (See **GRANT**, page 3A)



BY KEN MACDONALD

Life just keeps getting stranger.

On Labor Day, after riding in the Tour De Moore bicycle race and finishing dead last (more on that in a moment), I drove to the office to catch up on some editing. When I finished and returned to my truck, there were two ducks in the bed. In case you missed that — two ducks in the bed.

I have no idea who put them there or why,

but made of what I call Fisher Price plastic, the ducks were covered with a layer of dirt, and had obviously been decorating someone's yard or garden, so I couldn't help but wonder if I was then possessing stolen property. But to whom do you report such a thing?

Instead, I did what any normal citizen would do, and left them there. I've been driving around for a week now with two (See **OTHER STUFF**, page 6A)