

The News-Journal

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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BRAC-related growth overestimated

Hoke's population of 47,000 not expected to reach 56,700 as predicted

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff Writer

Projections in a 2008 Base Realignment and Closure report may have overestimated the potential Hoke County population increase by thousands.

The current county population total, based on U.S. Census data, stands at 46,952. The study sponsored by the BRAC Regional Task Force, now known as the Fort Bragg Regional Alliance, suggested that the county would have 56,704 residents by 2013.

With the final 2,000 members of the U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) and the Army

Reserve Command set to move to Fort Bragg by September, that kind of last-minute surge does not seem likely to happen at this point, real estate chief executive officer Larry Strother said.

As President and CEO of REA Strother Real Estate, Strother has worked in housing sales in Hoke,

Cumberland, Harnett, Lee and Moore counties since the 1970s. His company handles many of the existing homes for sale in Hoke County.

The area is growing, but it's not the kind of growth officials once predicted, he said.

"Everybody has anticipated that BRAC was going to bring a signifi-

cant amount of real estate growth to the area as well as the overall economy. There's been all kinds of numbers kicked around," Strother said. "That number has actually shrunk up from the huge amount they first talked about to the realm of the numbers we really anticipated."

(See GROWTH, page 6A)

Health director's suspension extended 30 days

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff Writer

Health Department Director Cynthia Oxendine, placed on paid leave for 30 days earlier this month, is now on leave for a total of 60 days while officials work with state consultants to make sense of a months-long backlog of unbilled or incorrectly billed Medicaid filings.

The county Board of Health authorized the additional leave while it looks into the Medicaid billing at

the department, chairman Mark Posey said.

"That (leave) is for an additional 30 days. We are not through looking at things at the Health Department to get a true and total picture of what we're looking at," he said.

Staff turnover and paperwork errors have left the Health Department with tens of thousands of dollars in unpaid Medicaid billing, according to a report prepared by Joy Reed, head of the local technical assistance and

Band leaves for capital

The Hoke County High School Mighty Marching Bucks leave Saturday for the National Memorial Day parade set for Monday, May 30.

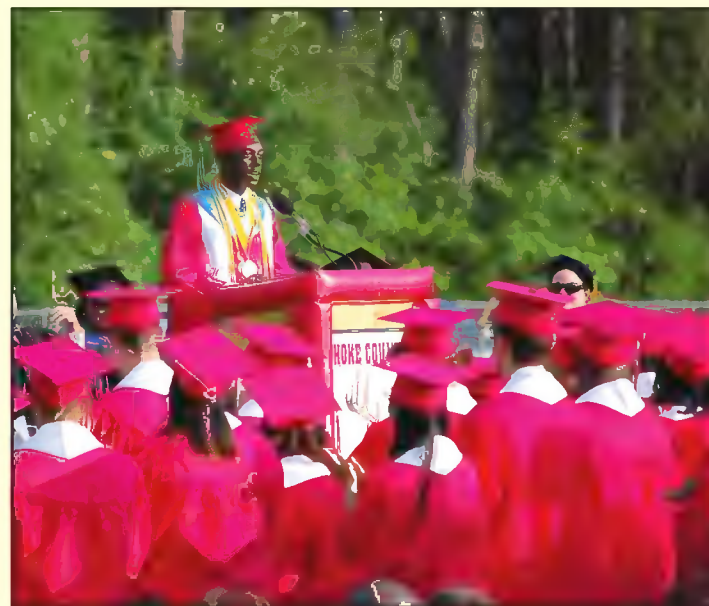
The marching band students are very excited to hit the road for their performance, band president Betty Perkins said.

For months the band and community supporters have

worked to raise money to send the band on the trip. The students cut their trip short by one day to save money, a school official said.

The parade will be televised on the Military Channel, the Pentagon Channel, at 10 p.m. on the American Life Network, and can be seen at www.military.com. The band will represent North Carolina as one of dozens selected from around the country. The parade begins Monday at 2 p.m. The band will also perform at the Fayetteville Veterans Affairs Hospital this week.

Hoke High Class of '11 graduates



Big Day
Some 300 Hoke High School seniors received diplomas Friday night at Raz Autry Stadium. At left, valedictorian Denzel Cummings addresses seniors. At right, Rashad Hurst, student body president, joins principal Bob Barnes on stage. Above, amidst a sea of red and white, Jessica Budreau looks at the camera. (Catharin Shepard and Hal Nunn photos)

This Week



Gets combat award
page 5A

Kiss cursive writing goodbye
page 4A

Teaching Fellows tour county
page 4A

- Calendar 2B
- Classifieds 5B
- Deaths 3A
- Editorials 2A
- Legals 3-4B
- Sports 7A
- Worship 3B

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It was on Memorial Day that he lost two buddies

Three World War II veterans now living here, share memories of serving their country

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff Writer

For Robert Hale, Memorial Day is not just about remembering soldiers who gave their lives for America but about remembering friends lost too soon.

It was the day two of his buddies

died while fighting in World War II. "That day has a very sad meaning to me," he said quietly, thinking back to another time and place.

The last Monday in May is not the only memorial Hale marks every year. Seven other friends died the day he turned 20 years old. He remembers another 10 men killed

on his mother's birthday. Of the 286 soldiers who served alongside Hale, fewer than half survived.

"When the war ended, there were 99 of us still standing," he said.

Hale, now 87, served in the Army for 30 years, 10 months and 19 days, after first being turned down for service in 1942 because he didn't pass

the physical. Six months after being turned down, he was drafted. The year after that, the young man from West Virginia coal mining country was fighting in North Africa.

Being an African-American in the United States Army of the 1940s sometimes meant fighting

(See VETERANS, page 5A)

OTHER STUFF

BY KEN MACDONALD

Jessica Kellermann stopped by to visit after patronizing the new farmer's market at FirstHealth Saturday. Naturally, the conversation turned to chickens.

She told us a friend had helped her move her mother's chicken coop using a trailer, but despite her gentle questioning along the lines of "Shouldn't you tie this thing down?" the friend proceeded until the structure fell off the trailer into the road.

"What's your point?" I asked. "All men have a story like that."

My friend Jimmy moved from Raeford to Laurinburg some years back, I told her, and after he got settled, I went to visit him.

(See OTHER STUFF, page 6A)

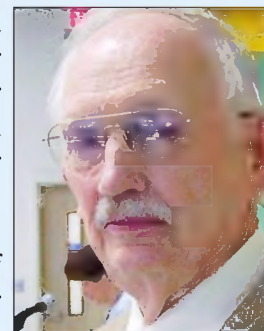
MacDonald is 'Citizen of Year'

M.L. "Locke" MacDonald was named Citizen of the Year by the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce, and was presented the award at the annual chamber banquet last Tuesday.

MacDonald was honored for his work documenting the history of Raeford and Hoke County and for other civic involvement.

MacDonald retired as principal of Hoke High School in 1992, and served in the National Guard and U.S. Navy before working for Burlington Industries for 16 years. He began teaching at Hoke High in 1975 and also worked as assistant principal.

(See CITIZEN, page 6A)



MacDonald

(McKinney photo)

Moretti withdraws murder guilty plea

A Raeford resident who pleaded guilty last week to a second-degree murder charge will instead stand trial for first-degree murder.

Legal counsel for the defense of Stanton Mark Moretti Jr., 45, of Raymond Street in Raeford withdrew the guilty plea Friday, the day he would have faced sentencing, court officials reported. The trial proceedings began Monday.

Moretti was previously represented by court-appointed attorneys.

(See PLEA, page 3A)