

The News-Journal

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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Lumbee Guaranty buys New Century branches

New Century Bank branches in Raeford and Pembroke will transition to Lumbee Guaranty offices in the coming year.

The banks jointly announced last week that Lumbee Guaranty is purchasing the real property, equipment and other assets of the two New Century Bank branches.

New Century Bank's office in Raeford is located on U.S. Business 401 next to Burger King.

Lumbee Guaranty Bank will assume all of the deposits associated with the two branches. New Century Bank will retain substantially all loans associated with the branches.

The two offices became part of New Century Bank when the company acquired Progressive State Bank in July 2006, New Century Bank President and Chief Executive Officer William L. Hedgepeth II said.

"While selling them was a difficult decision, it was also a

strategic one for New Century. We firmly believe these customers will be well served by their new financial partner, Lumbee Guaranty," Hedgepeth said in a statement.

Lumbee Guaranty President and CEO Larry R. Chavis said the bank offers 12 full-service

branches and will celebrate its 40th anniversary this year.

"We welcome the opportunity to serve these new customers, to expand our presence in Pembroke to two offices and to establish a presence in the Raeford/Hoke County market," Chavis said in a (See *BANKS*, page 4A)



Lt. Cathy LaBuz surprises Cheyenne Oxendine with a Justin Bieber game at the Sheriff's Office. The office adopted the family this Christmas. (Catharin Shepard photo)

Woman with cancer among those helped Sheriff's office gives toys to children, visits nursing homes with Santa

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Her recent breast cancer diagnosis and treatments left Deborah Hardin with heavier matters than Christmas presents on her mind but she still worried about giving her grandchildren a

few special gifts.

Hardin planned to bring her grandchildren to the toy giveaway at the Hoke County Sheriff's Office but she wasn't physically able to stand in line. She called asking if someone could set a few toys aside for them. Her simple request brought a response she never expected when

the officers decided to adopt Hardin and her three grandchildren.

"I asked them would they put toys to the side, and then they called me and said I touched their lives," she said. "It just meant the world to me. I said they were truly angels."

(See *SHERIFF SANTA*, page 3A)

This Week



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Ethanol, hospitals news of 2011

And then there's Hoke's centennial, tornadoes and health director

The News-Journal takes a look back at some of the biggest happenings in Hoke County in the last year.

County turns 100

April marked Hoke County's 100th anniversary, and residents turned out to enjoy special events including a parade, carnival and family fun night.

A beard-growing contest, carriage rides at the Raeford-Hoke Museum and more helped the county celebrate the special occasion. The county also buried a time capsule in front of the Hoke County Courthouse.

Elected officials attended proceedings to mark the anniversary and performers donned costumes to perform in "The Music Man" musical, the official centennial play. The festivities wrapped up with a centennial dinner hosted by the Raeford Presbyterian Church.

Ethanol plant goes bust



The Clean Burn Fuels ethanol plant just before it opened.



Marshall Newton clears debris at his home after tornadoes struck nearby.

After years of development and nine months of operation, the Clean Burn Fuels ethanol plant shut down production in April when corn prices soared above \$7 a bushel.

The shutdown was supposed to be temporary and Clean Burn Fuels officials hoped to reopen the ethanol plant later in the year. However, the company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in May.

In August, a judge ordered the plant sold in foreclosure auction to the highest bidder. Lien holder Cape Fear Farm Credit, representing a conglomerate of 16 banks that invested more than \$60 million into the plant, made the winning bid of \$34.5 million.

The plant went back to Cape Fear Farm Credit, which plans to market the plant and sell it to another company that would resume ethanol production. Interested buyers have toured the plant, which is undergoing some maintenance work before being offered (See *YEAR IN REVIEW*, page 5A)

Board wraps up 2011 Commissioners meet

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

The Hoke County Commissioners approved a consent agenda and addressed other county business last week during a brief final board meeting for 2011.

The Scurlock convenience site on Rockfish Road will be revamped next year, but at the moment the county is still working to get the paperwork in place to put the job out for bids. The county should be able to get the project underway and completed this fiscal year, County Manager Tim Johnson said.

The board also heard from Tax Collector Daphne Dudley and Tax Assessor Jennie Gibson. Dudley reported that the county has collected 71.68 percent or \$15.2 million of the \$20.1 million tax levy for 2011, up about 2 percent in collections from this time last year. Taxes are due by January 5 to avoid accruing interest. Interest will accrue on unpaid taxes beginning January 6.

The commissioners discussed approving a new attorney contract for the county Department of Social Services. The DSS board recommended selecting an attorney that several of the commissioners thought was too inexperienced to take the job.

The commissioners voted three to two in favor of hiring a firm instead of the DSS board's selected attorney to serve as the department's legal counsel. Commissioners Bobby Wright and Jean Powell voted against the motion. Chairman James Leach, Vice Chairman Tony Hunt and Commissioner Ellen McNeill, who serves on the (See *COMMISSIONERS*, page 4A)

Details released in child sex case

The Hoke County Sheriff's Office released more details last week about a case involving a man from Shannon charged with two counts of indecent liberties with a child and two counts of sexual battery.

Vinson Henderson, 43, of Les Norman Road in the Shannon community was arrested on the felony and misdemeanor charges December 19 and held under a \$100,000 bond. The bond was paid and Henderson released from the Hoke County Detention Center last week, officials reported. (See *INVESTIGATION*, page 4A)

Woman credits cat with 10 years

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

It's been 10 years since Caroline Hatchell and her unborn son nearly died on the floor of the family's Raeford home, but it's not a day that time could make her forget.

She also won't soon forget the day this November when Kitty, the small, white cat she credits with (See *KITTY*, page 4A)



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