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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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Schools must return \$550,000 to state

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Hoke County Schools must return more than half a million dollars in funding because state officials overestimated how many new students would enroll in the 2011-12 school year.

The reduction may mean slightly larger class sizes for some grades and

a loss of funding for eight teacher and support staff positions, officials said during the Board of Education meeting last week.

"That was kind of a blow we didn't expect," Superintendent Dr. Freddie Williamson said.

The board last week approved a budget amendment sending \$550,445 back to the state. The school system has about \$200,000

ready to go and is scanning the budget to find other ways to make up the rest of the funding without cutting the eight jobs, Williamson said.

The school system is seeking ways to cut another \$365,162 to make up the repayment. Officials said next year's budget may be tighter because of the cuts.

The state Department of Public Instruction is responsible for cal-

culating the projections and funds positions based on a formula the office uses, the superintendent said.

"They're normally on the money—we've never had any problems or issues other than this year," he said.

During the second month of school in fall of 2011, the school system reported a total student population of 8,065, which was 126 fewer

students than the state expected. The figures showed the state was off by 255 students in the first month but more enrolled in September.

The school system has until June 30, the end of the 2011-12 fiscal year, to return the money.

In other business, the Board of Education voted unanimously to approve proposed changes to the
(See *SCHOOLS*, page 8A)

FirstHealth to build after-hours clinic

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

FirstHealth of the Carolinas announced Tuesday plans to build an after-hours clinic in Hoke County.

The organization hopes to break ground for a new facility in front of Walmart on U.S. 401 Highway sometime in early March. The clinic will likely be finished in early summer, Public Relations Assistant Director Emily Sloan said.

The clinic will be open for after-hours

service on weekdays and weekends to treat acute-onset illnesses and injuries for adults and children. The clinic will offer a variety of non-emergency services, including treatment for ear and eye infections, insect bites and stings, sore throat, minor burns, cold and influenza symptoms, bronchitis, wheezing and asthma attacks, strep throat, nose bleeds, nausea and vomiting. Routine x-rays and lab services appropriate for the clinic will also be provided.

(See *CLINIC*, page 10A)

Food fight continues

Confusion reigns as issue debated nationwide

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Other Hoke County parents have come forward with stories about lunchtime complications for their preschool children after one mother's report, released through an elected official's office, made national headlines and sparked debate about government influence over chil-

dren's lunchboxes.

A four-year-old attending the North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten program at West Hoke Elementary was given a school meal including chicken nuggets after a state worker declared her brown-bag lunch of a turkey and cheese sandwich, potato chips, banana and apple juice didn't meet United States Department of

(See *LUNCHES*, page 5A)

Two more file for election

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Two more people have filed with the Hoke County Board of Elections to run for public office this year.

Elda Thacker, a Republican, filed to run for a four-year term on the Hoke County Board of Commissioners. Thacker will be running against incumbents Bobby Wright and James Leach, both Democrats, who filed Feb. 13 seeking

re-election. The board's five seats are all at-large positions. Thacker unsuccessfully ran for a seat on the commission in 2010.

If no more candidates file for the commission seats, Wright, Leach and Thacker will not be on the primary ballot in May because they will automatically become the nominees for their respective party, Board of Elections Director Caroline Shook explained.

"In order for there to be a primary,
(See *FILING*, page 8A)



Darius Book goes up for two of his 14 points in the Bucks win last week over Scotland County in the second round of the Southeastern Conference tournament. See story, page 9A.

This Week

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Fight against litter in Hoke still rages

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Jackie Hargrove didn't flinch as tractor-trailers roared past just feet away from where she stood on the side of Highway 211. After more than 20 years of coming out every few months to clean the roadside, the passing vehicles

didn't bother her, but this time the sheer amount of litter did.

"I picked up six bags of trash in a quarter mile," she said.

It was more litter at one time than she recalled seeing in the two decades since her former business, Ms. Jackie's Day Care, adopted the stretch of road a few miles outside

of Raeford. In that time Hargrove and the parents and former students who volunteer to help her have cleaned up fast-food wrappers, dirty diapers and everything else imaginable, she said.

It takes litterbugs just a second to toss garbage out a car window, but cleaning up the combined mess takes

hundreds of volunteer hours. Besides Hargrove and her fellow volunteers working on Highway 211, the Raeford Woman's Club, Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church, Macedonia Youth for Christ, the Hoke County Sheriff's Office and RockFish Church are also among the 18 groups
(See *LITTER*, page 8A)



Jackie Hargrove in action.

OTHER STUFF

BY KEN MACDONALD

Even at this stage of life, there remains a bit of junior high boy inside. And so last weekend in Mexico, when a fellow from Fayetteville named Herb dropped a concrete block on his toe and raised the mother of all blood blisters, three of us—Herb included—had to find out what happens if you pop it.

It began as an earnest deed—building walls on a lady's house in Reynosa before the organization's board meet-

ing. To move a large stack of blocks into the house for assembly, we had formed a human chain and were swinging blocks from one person to another with great enthusiasm, because the day was young and we weren't so tired that we had to stop pretending we did that sort of work all the time. Plus, there were women around, so we had to look manly. Someone flung a block to Herb, who is an accountant, and in mid-swing,
(See *OTHER STUFF*, page 10A)

Board hears health update

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Hoke County citizens need greater access to healthcare education and recreational activities, Hoke County Health Director Helene Edwards told the Board of Commissioners Monday.

Edwards presented the results of the 2011 Hoke County Community Health Assessment at the board's regular meeting. The assessment data is collected every four years by all county health departments in the state.

The results of the 2011 survey are similar to the results from 2007, the last time the department collected the data. In 2007 citizens ranked teenage pregnancy/STDs, heart disease, diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure) as the most important issues. The 2011 survey ranked diabetes, teenage pregnancy, hypertension and cancer as the top issues.

"There continues to be a significant concern within the 2007 and the 2011 community that addressed nutrition,
(See *HEALTH*, page 8A)