

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

75¢

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Wednesday, April 11, 2012

Both hospitals will build Cape Fear Valley, FirstHealth agree to drop appeals

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

After years of preparations and months of negotiations, Cape Fear Valley HealthCare and FirstHealth of the Carolinas announced last week they have reached an agreement and both will build hospitals in Hoke County.

Cape Fear Valley plans to

move forward with its 41-bed hospital and FirstHealth of the Carolinas with its 8-bed hospital, according to both healthcare systems. The sites of the future hospitals are located minutes away from each other on U.S. Highway 401 in eastern Hoke County.

The state granted both hospitals permission to build the projects they proposed in

2010, but Cape Fear Valley appealed the decision and FirstHealth of the Carolinas soon followed with its own appeal.

From there the issue became even more complicated when the 2011 State Medical Facilities Plan allocated an additional 65 beds to the region, which includes Cumberland and Hoke counties, and both

hospital systems made a bid for the newly available 65 beds. FirstHealth proposed to build a 65-bed hospital in Hoke County, while Cape Fear Valley sought to build a new hospital in Cumberland County with the 65 beds. However, the state denied both systems' Certificate of Need applications for those projects. (See *HOSPITALS*, page 4A)



Cranes raise steel, and a sign shows what the buildings will look like at the Cape Fear Valley site on US401.

Suspended, quits, rehired

DSS gives job to former Senior Services director

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

The Hoke County Department of Social Services hired former county Senior Services director Don Woods earlier this month, two weeks after Woods resigned from the director's job while serving a paid suspension.

The Department of Social Services hired Woods to fill a full-time Social Worker II position working with the DSS food stamp office, according to county personnel records. Woods was placed on suspension March 2 for unknown reasons and resigned from his position as Senior Services Director March 20. He was hired with Social Services April 2 with a salary of \$35,482, according to human

resources information.

The recent suspension was the fourth time Woods was placed on leave during his time as Senior Services director. He also served three unpaid suspensions with start dates of June 5, 2008, July 7, 2010 and May 17, 2011. The 2011 suspension was reportedly for "personal conduct."

State open records laws require officials to reveal certain changes in job status, such as suspensions, promotions and demotions, but do (See *REHIRED*, page 6A)



Children rush off the starting line to pick up eggs at the Relay for Life and Parks and Recreation Easter egg hunt. The hunt was part of a day of fundraising activities Saturday at the park on Highway 211. (Catharin Shepard photo)

Hoke eighth-fastest-growing county in U.S.

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

The U.S. Census Bureau announced last week that Hoke County is the fastest-growing county in North

Carolina and the eighth-fastest-growing county in the entire country.

Between 2010-11 the Hoke County population grew by about 2,300 people, or 4.9 percent. That's more than

twice the state average, according to Census Bureau numbers. The county is now home to nearly 50,000 people, the data shows.

This is familiar territory for Hoke, Economic Devel-

opment Director Don Porter said. The county has been featured on lists of the fastest-growing areas of the state and even the nation for the last decade, he said.

"We've been there before

and I just think that it's good news for our county. When you think in terms of those kinds of figures, the hospital announcements could not have come at a better time," (See *GROWTH*, page 6A)

Hoke Vietnam vets board bus to Charlotte for healing

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Several Vietnam vet-

erans from Hoke County took the opportunity to travel to Charlotte Motor Speedway last month to

take part in the state's largest Vietnam veteran homecoming celebration.

Veteran and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7930 member Elle Graham was among the group that attended the event along with others from his post and Hoke

Post 10, as well as other veterans from across the state.

The trip was peaceful and rewarding, Graham said.

"We just received

what was there and that was really true fellowship. That was a powerful thing," he said.

Thousands of veterans attended the event (See *VETS*, page 6A)



Take that!

Conoly Jones (left) takes a water balloon to the head during an organized fight at Hoke High School last week. Seniors planned the fight, which attracted about 100 students. (Ken MacDonald photo)

Wilkins runs for Congress

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Running for: U.S. Congress in N.C. District 2

Experience: Not previously elected in N.C.

Education: Master's degree in management

Position: Paid

Whispering Pines resident Steve Wilkins, a Democrat, announced he will seek election to the United States House of Representatives in North Carolina's Second District.

Wilkins was born in Durham County and served more than 20 years in the United States Army. At one time during his service, he worked

as a legislative liaison officer where his job was to communicate with the offices of Congressional leaders and prepare and deliver testimony before Congress.

"I'm very familiar with the process. I've been politically active all my life," he said.

Wilkins, the son of a longtime schoolteacher, graduated from the (See *WILKINS*, page 6A)



Steve Wilkins

This Week



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