



Hoke short on Highway Patrol troopers

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Retirements and promotions have cut Hoke County's number of State Highway Patrol troopers down from seven to three, and some Moore County troopers are stepping in to provide coverage across the shared district. "We'd like to have more, but it's what we do. We step up to the plate," First Sgt. T.D.

Simmons said. Simmons is in charge of the State Highway Patrol District 8, which includes Hoke and Moore counties.

Moore County is allotted 11 troopers and Hoke County is allotted seven, Simmons said. Currently Moore County is at full capacity, but the number of troopers in Hoke County has shrunk by more than half. Simmons arranged the roster to have Moore County troopers patrol the roads in Hoke to make sure the

fastest-growing county in North Carolina is covered by the state agency.

"We're not going to slight the citizens of a county at all," he said. It's not the first time in his 26 years of serving on the State Highway Patrol that it's been necessary to balance out one county with another, and Hoke's predicament isn't anywhere near as bad as some other, larger counties in the state, Simmons said.

"The whole state is short-staffed, it's not

just us," he said.

The agency loses about 6.5 sworn officers a month, according to a March 2011 presentation to the state Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation. At that time the state was short by 65 troopers, and that number was predicted to grow to 176 vacancies by summer of 2012.

Part of the reason for the shortage is while (See TROOPERS, page 4A)



Support poles go up at a solar farm located at St. Pauls Rd. and East Palmer Street. The poles will soon hold solar panels. (Catharin Shepard photo)

Here comes the sun, power that is \$20 million solar energy project should be online by November

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
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Raeford's first utility-scale solar panel array is now under construction in a field near the intersection of St. Pauls Road and East Palmer Street.

Workers have started installing the bases to hold about 26,600 photo voltaic (PV) solar panels that will soak up sunlight and convert it into electricity, according to officials with the two companies partnering on the venture.

The North Carolina-based Birdseye

Renewable Energy and Strata Solar companies combined their efforts to bring the \$20 million solar farm project to Raeford. So far the companies have completed four of six planned solar farms in southeastern North Carolina, including several in Robeson County.

"I am proud that my collaboration with Strata Solar and our local landowners has brought such significant solar investment to Hoke County. We found the Town of Raeford and Hoke County to be exceptionally supportive of our project from day one," Birdseye Renewable Energy

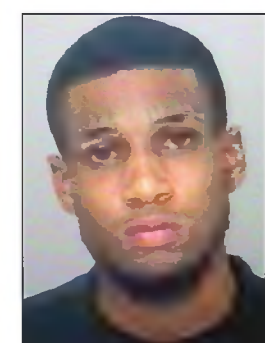
CEO Brian Bednar said.

The solar farm will generate about 6.4 megawatts of direct current or about 5 megawatts of alternating current, according to Strata Solar Vice President of Marketing Blair Schooff. The farm will likely be operational by early November, Schooff said.

The construction typically takes about 14 weeks from start to finish. Right now the workers are putting up the posts in preparation for the rest of the installation. Soon the panels will start going in along (See SOLAR, page 5A)

Arrest made in murder

Robeson deputies arrest Raeford man in shooting



Davis

A Raeford man was arrested last week in connection with the August 23 shooting death of a Lumber Bridge resident.

Deputies with the Robeson County Sheriff's Office on Wednesday arrested

Quentin Maurice Davis, 22, of the 100 block of

Woodland Court in Raeford on a charge of first-degree murder. Davis is accused of shooting TwaQuan Curtis Evans, 27, outside a home on the 400 block of Quick Road in Lumber Bridge where Evans was reportedly staying with relatives.

The shooting took place around 11 p.m., according to Maj. Howard Branch.

"Two females were in the house, they heard gunshots outside, the victim was outside. The victim comes inside stating that he'd been shot," Branch said. Evans asked the women to call for help, then collapsed on the floor and died, Branch said.

Davis was held without bail at the Robeson County Detention Center.

Hoke County deputies arrested Davis on August 13 and charged him with allegedly firing shots at the home of a woman on Timber Ridge Drive, a street off of Wayside Road in eastern Hoke County. At that time Davis was held in the Hoke County Detention Center under a \$50,000 bond. Davis was previously convicted of resisting an officer in 2008 and felony common law robbery in 2009.

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Death march survivor Mims to return to Japan

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Bataan Death March survivor John Mims is going back to Japan for the first time in more than half a century, returning as an honored guest to the place where he and hundreds of other prisoners of war were once forced to labor in a coal mine under daily threat of death.

The retired World War II veteran and his wife received a special invitation from the Japanese ambassador offering them the chance to take an expenses-paid trip as part of a national effort to reach out to the aging sur-

vivors who made it out of the prison camps. If his health allows, next month Mims will join five other former prisoners of war – including one other veteran captured with Mims and forced to work in the same coal mine – in touring the places so many other soldiers never left.

"I thought that was something else. This character was over there in '45," Mims said. "Now he's returning in 2012. That's quite a number of years."

Mims works to educate others about the Bataan Death March and what the surviving soldiers faced in the months afterward in the (See MIMS, page 6A)



Mims in 2006 at a gathering for survivors of the Bataan Death March. (George Baird photo)



This house caught fire Monday and then again Tuesday. (Hal Nunn photo)

House fire damage set at \$225k

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Firefighters responded Monday night and again Tuesday morning to a fire at an unoccupied house on Fayetteville Road near the Waybetter Arabians horse farm.

The blaze at the large single-family home located on the 3800 block of Fayetteville Road started Monday night, Fire Marshal Maj. Freddy Johnson said. After getting the fire

out and leaving for the night, the crews were called back Tuesday to the same property.

"They had a rekindle this morning," Johnson said.

Homeowner Jarvis Carr was renovating the house and it was unoccupied at the time of the fire, according to a report. The first call came in around 10:18 p.m. Monday. Firefighters from Hillcrest, Puppy Creek, Raeford and North Raeford (See FIRE, page 4A)



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