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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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Hoke projects depend on disgraced agency

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

A major grant-providing agency that helped fund many Hoke County development projects in recent years was ordered last week to stop giving out money after a state audit cited

problems.

A letter from state budget director Art Pope to Elaine Matthews, senior vice president of the Rural Development Economic Center, ordered the center to stop disbursing funding for projects and notified Matthews that the state had suspended funding for

the center itself. The letter, dated July 18, also ordered the agency to stop paying employees, operational expenses and any other administrative costs with state funding.

The Office of State Budget Management (OSBM) with the authorization of Gov. Pat McCrory ordered

the center to provide all financial statements and other financial information to the office for further investigation.

Additionally, the office is considering requiring the center to return over \$112 million in state funds, though that depends on the center's

compliance with the state office's investigation and orders, the letter stated.

"The Rural Center's mission is to develop, promote, and implement sound economic strategies to improve the quality of life of rural (See RURAL, page 4A)

Groups help with school supplies

Two back-to-school events have been scheduled in Raeford to help students as they head back to class.

This weekend, the 15th Masonic District will host a community picnic in Robin Heights Park, where members will provide food, clothes and school supplies. The event begins at 11:30 a.m. Saturday.

The Hoke branch of the NAACP will hold its 10th annual Community Back to School event Saturday, August 10 at MacDonald Gym at Hoke High School.

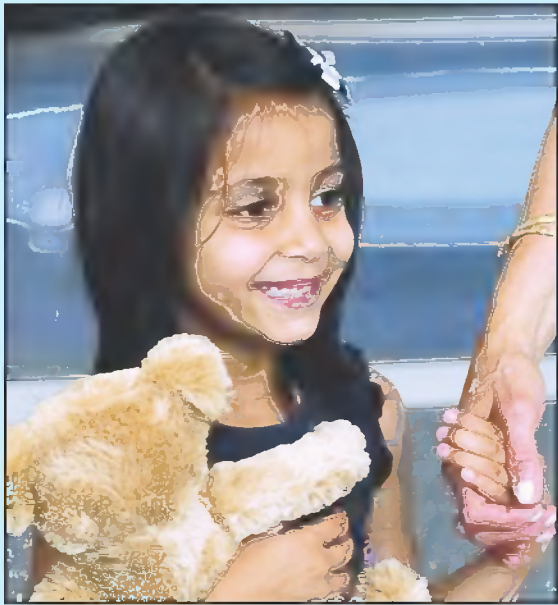
In addition to free school supplies, the event will feature food, parent information, voter registration and entertainment. Hours are 10 a.m. until noon.

Three file for Council

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Three people have filed to run for election to two available at-large seats on the Raeford City Council this fall, while no candidates filed to challenge the incumbent mayor for that office.

Council incumbents Shelley Wilburn and Wayne Willis and candidate Dr. Charles Allen have filed to run for election to the council, according to the Hoke County Board of Elections. Allen (See FILING, page 4A)



Eight-year-old Maryam is one of six children who came from Afghanistan for medical treatment, and is living with Raeford resident Ashley Lewis while she's here. Surgery to correct a narrowing of her aorta and to close a fetal blood vessel was performed in Chapel Hill. (N.C. Children's Hospital photos)



Afghan girl finds solace in Raeford

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Eight-year-old Maryam got to see the ocean for the first time in her life this month, and now has a chance at living a much longer and

healthier life thanks to a major surgery paid for by a Moore County-based non-profit organization.

The little girl was one of six children who traveled without their families from Afghanistan to North Carolina this month to undergo medical procedures thanks to Solace for the Children-Southern Pines (SCSP), a recently founded branch of the national Solace for the Children organization.

Solace for the Children offers a way for children from war-torn countries to come to America to receive typically minor surgeries that are not readily available or affordable in their home nations. However, Maryam, who is staying with a host family in Raeford, had a slightly different case, SCSP founder Bart Clark said.

"Our plan was for easy medical cases. God had a different plan for that," he said.

While Clark and Solace volunteers were preparing for the arrival of the five other children, the national organization contacted the branch about taking one more case. Maryam was diagnosed with a heart problem and needed surgery to her aorta. Unlike the other children, who are staying with host families in Moore County, she had to go to Chapel Hill University hospital for surgery and follow-up appointments, a much more involved and serious situation than what the other children and their host families would have to deal with.

But after learning of her need, Clark and the volunteers at SCSP couldn't say no.

Planning for arrival

Solace for the Children was founded over 10 years ago when volunteers began bringing children from Belarus to the U.S. for medical treatment. It also serves as a peace-building (See SOLACE, page 6A)



Maryam (third from right) with other children in Southern Pines. (Contributed photo)

This Week



Sandy Grove Middle nearly ready for children See page 4A

Mt. Elim hosts youth rally See page 4A

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Allen says he'll bring fresh face to Raeford government

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer



Allen files for office with Caroline Shook, elections supervisor.

Pharmacist Dr. Charles Allen, a former Board of Health member and long-time local resident, filed last week to run for a seat on the Raeford City Council.

Allen grew up near Raeford and then moved to town in 1974. Since then he

has lived in different places to work or attend school but currently resides in the city.

Allen moved to Pembroke to attend UNC-Pembroke, where he earned a bachelor's degree in business management. After working elsewhere, he later returned to school at UNCP to study pharmacy in the university's pre-pharmacy

program.

Allen went on to earn his doctoral degree in pharmacy from Campbell University. He is currently employed as the pharmacy director for Carlie C's IGA grocery chain, which has 13 stores throughout North Carolina. Allen works at the Carlie C's pharmacy in (See ALLEN, page 4A)

OTHER STUFF

BY KEN MACDONALD

When you take a group of youth to a church conference where there's a band, there's swooning, autographs, and pictures—and that's just me—the middle school girls really go crazy. "Jimmy, the leader, showed me this dance move at supper," said one girl. "What? He can't do this?" I asked, breaking into my best Steve Martin dance imitation.

"Ewww."

Probably nobody ever said Ewww to Steve Martin, so the band was just going to have to get all the accolades. Anyway, my job was to drive the van.

(See OTHER STUFF, page 6A)

Known for kind heart, fried chicken

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer



Carl Virgil loved working on cars, spreading the gospel and making his famous fried chicken for people at the local restaurant bearing his name, but above all he is remembered by his family for his kind and giving nature, daughter Joyce Virgil said.

"He would help anybody. He was very giving, very, very freehearted to everybody," she said. "I don't think he met anybody that

he wouldn't help."

Virgil, who along with his wife Dollie built and operated Virgil's restaurant on U.S. Highway 401 just outside of Raeford, died last month after a battle with stage-four cancer. Virgil had been experiencing pain for some time, but it wasn't until late in 2012 that a doctor diagnosed him with multiple myo lymphoma. He underwent treatment but then developed shingles and had to go off of the chemotherapy, his daughter said. The cancer spread to his brain shortly before he passed away June 24 at the age of (See VIRGIL, page 6A)



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