

Broken pipe floods courthouse

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

A pipe on the third floor of the Hoke County Courthouse developed a leak one weekend in June and some operations are still displaced while workers repair the damage.

Courthouse employees arrived at the office June 17 to find a water line on the third floor had developed a leak and damaged multiple rooms and soaked some court records, County Manager Tim Johnson said. "Murphy's law says it's going to break on a Friday night, and it

pretty much ran all weekend," he said. The water ran from the third floor down to the basement, causing damage to areas such as the judge's chambers and the attorney-client room. The walls and flooring suffered damage, and Johnson said he had concerns about the

potential for mold growth in the areas. "Any time you have wet stuff on carpet, immediately you'll have people saying there's mold, there's mildew," he said. The county brought in air quality specialists to test for mold issues and found that there was

a higher than acceptable level of mold spores in some of the affected parts of the courthouse. There was nothing dangerous, but the levels were "higher than what I liked," Johnson said. Workers continue repairs by redoing the affected plaster and (See COURTHOUSE, page 6A)

Alleged AWOL soldier, 4 others face charges



Authorities arrested Michael James Gonzales, 30, of the 300 block of Coppers Drive in Raeford on charges of desertion and manufacturing methamphetamine, according to information from the Hoke County Sheriff's Office. He was held on military warrants. He was placed in the Hoke County Detention Center under a \$200,000 secured bond. Deputies also arrested Trevis Donte Jenkins, 27, of the 6600 block of Muscat Road in Hope Mills; Tabatha Kay Bauer, 30, of the 200 block of Fondern Drive in Hope Mills; Tracy Michelle Branham, 28, of the 5000 block of Madison Drive in Hope Mills and Ashley Nicole Slade, 30, of the 3100 block of Ashboro Street in Fayetteville. (See CHARGED, page 4A)

Woman raped at home

Law enforcement officials are searching for an unidentified man wanted for raping a woman at her home in eastern Hoke County on Monday. A woman called 911 Monday reporting that an unknown assailant had attacked her on the back porch of her home. The suspect

was reportedly armed with a handgun and knife and sexually assaulted the victim, according to information from the Hoke County Sheriff's Office. The victim was taken to Cape Fear Valley Medical Center for medical treatment (See RAPE, page 4A)

Buses back on roads



This file photo from 2012 is a reminder to watch out for school buses.

Children and teens will start back to school this Monday in Hoke County, and local and state officials are asking drivers (See BUSES, page 6A)



Top: a youngster tries out the interactive touch screen station in the main lobby of Sandy Grove Middle; the solar trees (left) outside the new middle school; officials cut the ribbon to mark the grand opening. (Catharin Shepard photos)

Magic day for Sandy Grove students

Energy independent school opens for families to see

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Starting Monday, the Sandy Grove Middle School Panthers are on the prowl. Hundreds of parents and students

joined elected officials and state representatives in the newly completed school's gymnasium Saturday to celebrate the grand opening of Hoke County's third middle school. "Where do we go from this point? We're moving into the future," Super-

intendent Dr. Freddie Williamson said. "...The future is now, as evidenced by this beautiful, wonderful facility." The school is unlike any other in Hoke County or North Carolina, and officials hailed it a first in the nation. (See SANDY GROVE, page 6A)

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Residents tell board gunfire plagues area

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Hoke County officials are examining the existing county gun ordinance and

plan to bring an updated version before commissioners for their consideration before the end of the year. County Manager Tim Johnson discussed the issue

with commissioners during the regularly scheduled board meeting Monday night after four residents of the eastern part of the county spoke during the public

comment period about nuisance gun discharges in their neighborhood. Cathy Brewer said there are often people repetitively firing weapons in her part of

eastern Hoke County near the Rockfish community. "This is scaring the kids, everybody's frightened, scared. Call the police, they (See GUNS, page 4A)

OTHER STUFF

By KEN MACDONALD

In the British TV comedy series Fawlty Towers, the hotel owner Basil Fawlty has ordered guests to leave, erroneously thinking they were violating rules. Basil's wife Sybil sets him straight and tells him he has to go up to their room and apologize. "Well, what will I say?" Basil asks indignantly. Sybil: Tell them you made a mistake. Basil: Oh, brilliant. Is that what made Britain great? 'I'm so sorry, I made a mistake'. What have you got for a brain - sponge cake?

Basil makes his way up to the room muttering, "I'm so sorry, I made a mistake. I'm so sorry, I made a mistake. I'm so sorry, I made a mistake." Entering the room, he says, "I'm so sorry, my wife has made a mistake." With this scene in mind, I made my way over to Raeford City Hall Friday. Earlier in the week, I'd taken my water bill to the office to assert that somebody had made a most grievous error. I was nice enough, I suppose, but I was certain and persistent that somebody (See OTHER STUFF, page 6A)

Council marks 35 years of teaching reading

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

When Barbara Buie took over as director of the Hoke Reading and Literacy Council over three decades ago, the operations were crammed into a tiny office in the back of the building and the first funding came entirely from

local donations. Now, Buie is joining current director Carole Taitt and members of the council board in a special celebration to mark the 35th anniversary of the organization dedicated to improving literacy skills for people of all ages in Hoke County. (See LITERACY, page 4A)

