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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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FirstHealth hospital opening set

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Hoke County will celebrate the opening of its first hospital Sunday, September 22 during the closing events of the North Carolina Turkey Festival.

FirstHealth of the Carolinas announced an afternoon of activities planned to recognize the grand opening of FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital – Hoke Campus. The hospital will feature eight acute care beds and a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week emergency department. The hospital will open to patients for the first time on Tuesday, October 1.

Weather permitting, the grand opening event will begin at 2 p.m. with a freefall jump by four members of the All Veteran Parachute Team. One of the team's members will be carrying an American flag, which will be raised by a color guard to fly over the hospital campus.

FirstHealth Chief Executive Officer David Kilarski and a number of other FirstHealth officials will attend the opening to welcome guests.

"FirstHealth made a commitment to serve Hoke County more than a decade ago, and we look forward to opening the doors of the community's first hospital," Kilarski said.

Hoke resident and long-time businessman Julian King, who served as chairman of the FirstHealth of the Carolinas Board of Directors, will also participate. (See HOSPITAL, page 6A)

Fire marshal wins national recognition



By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Hoke County Emergency Services Director and Fire Marshal Freddy Johnson has been named Fire Chief magazine's volunteer Fire Chief of the Year for 2013.

Johnson, who began his service as a volunteer firefighter in 1975, has worked with the Hoke County Sheriff's Office and Emergency Management since 2001. He continues serving as the chief of Stoney Point Volunteer Fire Department in Cumberland County, a position he has held since 1980.

The fire marshal is the subject of an article in Fire Chief magazine's September 2013 edition.

"Improvements spearheaded by Chief Johnson resulted in an ISO rating of Class 3, the only department in North Carolina to achieve this rating," according to an excerpt from an article published online by Fire Chief. "He led a (See JOHNSON, page 4A)

Underinsured can see doctor for \$25 at clinic

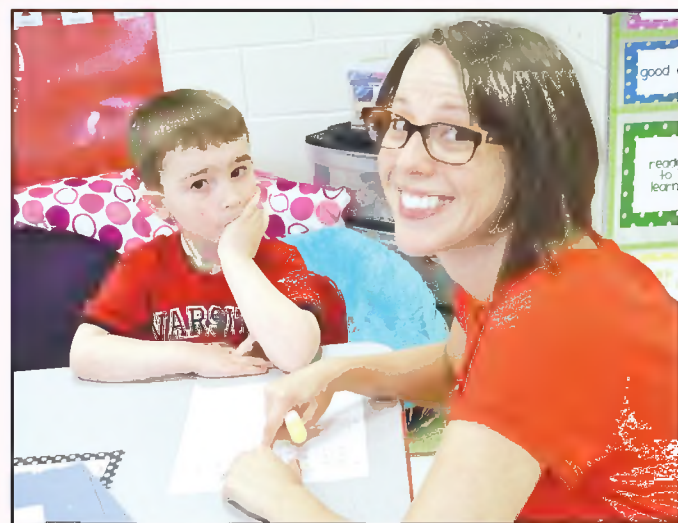
By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

North Carolina residents who are uninsured and meet certain income requirements will be able to receive primary health care services for \$25 per visit at a new state-supported health care clinic opening in Raeford next week.

The RHCC Hoke County Community Health Center in Raeford, set to open September 3, is supported in part by the state-funded Medical Access Plan (MAP) grant administered through the state Department of Health and Human Services. The grant will provide coverage for primary health care services for people who are uninsured at 19 state-designated rural health center locations in North Carolina.

If a person qualifies for MAP coverage, a doctor's visit at the clinic will cost \$25, according to information from DHHS Secretary (See CLINIC, page 4A)

Time to get back to work



Wearing red to support schools

Top: Don Steed Elementary fourth grade students Jaylen Bryant, Austin Hendrix, Callon Smalls and Anthony Florred enjoy their lunch break on the first day of the 2013-14 school year. Many students and teachers wore red August 26 in a show of support for public education, Principal Kim Gray said. Above left: A kindergarten student shows Gray how to spell his name. Above right: New kindergartner Justin Huggins works one-on-one with teacher Brandi Calloway. (Catharin Shepard photos)

Despite funding cuts, Hoke keeps all teachers

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

After a summer of uncertainty regarding state funding for public education, Hoke County Schools settled on a way to keep all teachers and teacher assistants on the job even though it meant less money for other areas.

According to the Department of Public Instruction's fiscal year 2013-14 allotment documentation, Hoke County Schools ultimately received \$1.7 million less in state funding than it received the previous school year. The state budget came with some surprises for the local school system, school Finance Officer Wanna Chavis said.

"When we got the final budget numbers, we realized we were cut 28 and a half teachers, one media or guidance position. We had a (See SCHOOLS, page 6A)

This Week

5 arrested in drug bust
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Turkey Festival forms gospel choir for flock



Patrick Grace (left) leads the new Turkey Festival gospel choir. (Catharin Shepard photo)

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

It's a question North Carolina Turkey Festival officials have heard for years: Is there anything specifically offered for Christians in the festival activities?

About 30 people gathered at St. James United Church of God Monday night to get ready to answer that question as the Turkey Festival Community Choir rehearsed for the first of several gospel music performances set for the festival, which will run from September 13-21.

Festival president Valerie Livingston said she had requests for more faith-based activities during the annual event, and this year she decided to lead the charge on the project herself.

"I started with some of the members who are here now to see if we could get a choir started," she said. The group has been meeting for the last several months, preparing for the festival performances.

David Purcell, who works with the Hoke Area Transportation System, volunteered his services and experience with performing. (See CHOIR, page 6A)

