

# The News-Journal

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## FirstHealth reports satisfaction, growth

### Hospital spokesman says 16 additional beds applied for are needed now

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD  
Staff writer

The response to Hoke County's first hospital has been so strong that not only did the administration bring on additional staff to deal with the demand, but also officials say the hospital right now could easily fill the additional 16 inpatient beds currently tied up in litigation.

The hospital, which opened to the public in October 2013, has gone from seeing about 1,100 patients in the emergency department in the first month of operation to seeing nearly double that number in January, according to assistant emergency department medical director Dr. Matthew Harmody.

FirstHealth expected a good response from the community once the local hospital

opened, but the rapid increase in patient visits to the emergency department still surprised the administrators. Officials had to make some quick adjustments to handle the influx of people.

"I think it's safe to say the number of patients we see has far exceeded our expectations, so we've had to adjust our staffing levels," Harmody said.

The hospital hired additional nursing

staff to provide another nursing shift to cover the patient needs. And although the additional 16 beds that the state awarded FirstHealth are still tied up in court, the hospital could fill them today if they had them in place, Harmody said.

The hospital itself is designed to allow for additional construction and the entire existing hospital would be converted into (See HOSPITAL, page 4A)



Educators, wearing red to show unity, rallied with Rep. Garland Pierce (right foreground), Rep. Ken Goodman (not pictured), and commission candidate Allen Thomas (left rear). They were led by NCAE local president Diane Mitchell (left center).

## Teachers decline to sign at rally

*'We prepare the children for tomorrow, we prepare the leaders for tomorrow, and if the General Assembly thinks that we're going to sit back and take this, they're wrong.'* —Bob Barnes

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD  
Staff writer

The statewide debate over education matters such as teacher tenure and school vouchers doesn't have anything to do with education at all, Hoke Schools Assistant Superintendent Dr. Bob Barnes said.

"It has to do with politics, dirty politics and business. That's all it is. The governor keeps saying he's pro-business. Well, he can't be pro-business without being pro-education. That's the bottom line," Barnes said. "We prepare the children for tomorrow, we prepare the leaders for tomorrow, and if the General Assem-

bly thinks that we're going to sit back and take this, they're wrong."

Barnes was one of several people who spoke last week at a Decline To Sign rally for educators in Hoke County Schools that was hosted by the Hoke County chapter of the North Carolina Association of Education (NCAE). The event held at the Hoke High media center invited teachers and others with an interest in the school system to speak their minds about the ongoing debate over teacher tenure (career status) and other topics.

The party was meant to (See TEACHERS, page 4A)



Horses race in last year's event at Carolina Horse Park.

## Stoneybrook runs Saturday

### Expected to draw thousands

The 63rd annual Stoneybrook Steeplechase will bring some of the best steeplechase racers in the world to Raeford this weekend.

The steeplechase, a springtime tradition for the Sandhills, is set for Saturday, April 5 with the gates opening at 9:30 a.m. The event will feature five horse races including those on the flat and over fences, as well as many contests,

activities and more for spectators.

The shops at Merchants Crossing and the Kid Zone open at 10 a.m. Sign-ups for the famous Botanicals Fabulous Flowers and Orchids hat contest will be at 10 a.m. as well, along with the sign-ups for the Jefferson Inn Stick Horse Race. The hat contest and stick horse races begin at 11:30 a.m. The contest winners (See RACES, page 6A)

## Powell says there's still work to be done

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD  
Staff writer

Hoke County Commissioner Jean Powell will run for another four-year term on the board.

Powell, a Democrat, is one of 12 candidates who have filed to run for one of three seats on the county board. The candidate said she decided to run for reelection because there are still matters she would like to address as part of the Hoke County local government.

"I still feel like I have something to offer to the county and there's certainly plenty of work to do as a commissioner," she said. "I would like to continue figuring out what needs to be done for Hoke County to be able to meet the future, so to speak." (See POWELL, page 4A)



Powell

## Banquet honors officers

The Hoke County Sheriff's Office held its annual awards banquet Friday night honoring local officers who have made a difference in the community. Bob Conerly, a former

Sheriff's Office deputy, received a special honor at the ceremony. Sheriff Hubert Peterkin named Conerly an honorary lieutenant of the sheriff's office. Conerly was wounded and

left paralyzed during a training accident in June 1995. Conerly was shot with a blank round while he and other officers were practicing techniques for arresting dangerous felons, according to News-Journal records. He had been an officer with the department for four years before the training accident. (See HONORS, page 6A)



Sheriff Hubert Peterkin (right) with former officer Bob Conerly.

## HokeFest opens

The fourth annual HokeFest barbecue festival and carnival kicks off this week with carnival rides, food and fun, plus special musical guests.

The Christian rock band 4PointsNorth will play at the festival Saturday night. The (See HOKEFEST, page 6A)

## Quantico Tactical gets \$10 billion contract

Quantico Tactical, located in western Hoke County on Highway 211, has received a five-year, \$10 billion contract to provide special operations equipment to multiple military agencies.

Quantico Tactical produces performance apparel, gear, tactical medical supplies, armor and fire-

arms for federal agencies, law enforcement, military and "the serious adventure enthusiast," according to the company. Retired U.S. Marine David Hensley founded the company in 2001 in Quantico, Virginia. Since then, the company has grown to include retail locations across the (See CONTRACT, page 6A)

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