

# Walker

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 professionally, composition. It alarms me that sometimes students graduate and they're not able to compete with other counties or with other states," he said. "I want to be proactive in things like that."  
 As a teenager, Walker went to work to help support his family after his father died. He joined the Marine Corps and served in Vietnam before returning to school to finish his high school diploma. He attended Richmond Community College to learn technical skills and in 1995 started his own electrician business called Hoke Electric, which he operated until retiring in 2008. He has also served as a pastor for 36 years.  
 Walker and his wife Nancy moved to Hoke in 1973 and raised three children, who now have families of their own. Walker said he has been involved in volunteering as a chaperone with the local schools, and one of his adult children teaches in the school system.  
 If elected, Walker said he would like to focus on a number of different issues including employing highly qualified teachers in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), supporting military families and getting the community more involved in the schools as "stakeholders."  
 "We need more businesses to be a part of this school system," Walker said.

Helping children and teens from military families transition into Hoke is another important priority for him, Walker said.  
 Supporting standards that can make sure students come out of high school "college and career ready" is a must to be able to help those students prosper after graduation, he said.  
 "Students graduate and they sort of get lost in the system. They work in jobs that are not high-paying jobs," Walker said.  
 Supporting teachers, including financially, is also one of the candidate's goals.  
 "My goodness, we're still working to try to get our teachers a raise. Anything that I can do to support them ... I'm really a person who believes teachers ought to get a decent salary," he said. "And, of course, also the teacher's assistant should be paid properly."  
 Walker also said that, if elected, he would support upgrading existing facilities and adding new buildings where necessary. He spoke favorably of the proposed plan to build a third campus to Hoke County High School.  
 "I want to be a part of things like that," he said.  
 Walker said he wants to work within the board's ethics and framework to get things done.  
 He was president of the Native American Bible College in Shannon for two years and knows

how boards work, he said. He would also seek to develop close relationships with the other board members and the superintendent.  
 "It's going to take a team effort and I like to work as a team individual," he said.  
 The biggest challenge for the county schools remains getting adequate funding, Walker said. Hoke is one of the fastest-growing counties in the state and needs money to make important projects happen.  
 "I don't believe it's our county commissioners but just the lack of funds that I believe is going to be a challenge for us, but I believe we can make it," he said.  
 If elected, Walker said, his first priority would be to look at the student population numbers at each school and focus on preparing for continued growth.  
 "Our high school is running over capacity," he said. "... We're growing in leaps and bounds, and somehow things have to be stretched to make things comfortable for those people who are coming in."  
 The candidate said people should consider voting for him because he is familiar with the school system, is passionate about supporting students and teachers and is a team player.  
 "I've been in the system. I'm fresh, I'm new, I have a great zeal for it. I think I could make some things happen," Walker said.



You just don't find a rooster with the run of the place any old where. (Catharin Shepard photo)

# Assault

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 Deputies called to the 1100 block of Athens Road in Raeford just before 10 a.m. July 23 arrived to find the suspect had broken into the victim's home while she was asleep, according to the sheriff's office.

Blackmon allegedly held Shannon Durham at gunpoint and took her cell phone and then ordered her to go into the bathroom where Blackmon allegedly assaulted her, authorities said. The victim was told to go into the kitchen and then noticed the

door was open. She was able to run out of the door and escape to a neighbor's residence, where she called 911.  
 Investigators were able to locate Blackmon and arrest her at her home in Parkton. She was held under a \$100,000 bond.

# Tax-free

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 average gas price for a gallon of regular unleaded was \$3.29 in Tennessee.  
 The rules for what items are

considered tax-free this weekend depend on the state offering the weekend, but in general, consumers will be able to buy general school supplies, clothing

under \$100 per item and tablets, computers and computer-related accessories that cost less than \$1,000. Items such as cell phones and televisions are not included.

# Home Food

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 The hometown grocery store has access to here, we don't have access to in Moore County, so we come way down here to buy fish and some other stuff—peas," she said. "We have to go, we have to get a bushel of peas, because we don't have anybody up there who sells them."  
 The fresh produce that's a big enough draw to pull in customers from other counties is taking over as the biggest focus at the locally owned and operated grocery store, David McNeill said. The grocery items such as canned goods and meat will be going away to make room for more produce.  
 "We're just going to kind of re-focus our ideas of what we're going to be selling here and capitalize on our farm-fresh produce, because we grow a lot of our stuff and we support a lot of our local farmers here as well," McNeill said. "Hopefully, we can provide more of the produce aspect of the market and kind of more of a variety of what we're going to have as well."

The hometown grocery store has been around for almost a century, and includes a feed and seed section in the adjacent building. This year marks the 96th anniversary, and the change in focus to solely offering produce is a business move to make sure Home Food is around to see its 100th birthday. The grocery store market is "cutthroat" these days, McNeill said.  
 "I hate that it's come to this, but this is what's going to be the best for the future as well," he said.  
 About 80 percent of the store's fruit and vegetables are from local farmers. Everything from beans to honey comes from Hoke and surrounding counties. Fresh produce has always been the store's bestseller, McNeill said.  
 "It's the bread and butter," he said. Home Food's takeout window will also continue to sell sandwiches, desserts and drinks to hungry customers who want something a little different than typical fast food. The store opened the grill when the How-

ell Drugstore lunch counter closed. The old drugstore's chicken salad might be gone, but Home Food's chicken salad sandwich is on the menu on Main Street.  
 That was customer Jodi Onachila's pick for lunch Tuesday. She likes to come to the window for lunch after working out in an exercise class, she said.  
 "I just think it's healthy eating and it's convenient," she said.  
 Kim Hollingsworth, who took Onachila's order at the window, said the menu is fast to go but not fast food.  
 "Everything's homemade—homemade desserts, fresh ground burgers daily," she said.  
 The grill uses local ingredients from the grocery store in its cooking too, Hollingsworth said.  
 The feed store will continue operating as usual and Home Food is not in any danger of shutting down, McNeill said.  
 "We're definitely not going anywhere," he said.

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