

# The News-Journal

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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Robert Stephens leads 1,500 protestors from Macy's in New York City to Grand Central Station. (Photo by Jonathan Mehring—mehringphoto.com, Instagram @mehringbearings)

## Raeford native leads protest charge

### 'I want to leave this world better than I found it when I came here'

By CATHARIN SHEPARD  
Staff writer

He's been tear gassed, shot at with rubber bullets and hit by police batons while taking part in the protests over the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson and Eric Garner in New York City. As people in Ferguson, Missouri and New York City have raised their voices in protest, a man from

Hoke County has added his support and even leadership to the growing movement.

Robert Terrell Stephens, son of May A. Stephens and the late Rev. Robert Stephens of Wesley Chapel AME Zion Church, said he felt what happened to Brown and Garner was wrong, and that he decided he had to get involved.

"When there's anything wrong, you're obligated to do something

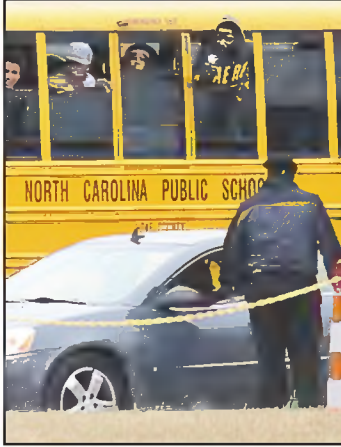
about it, not just sit on the sidelines," he said.

Stephens, 28, was born and raised in Hoke County. He had a strong sense of community involvement even as a teenager, he said. When Stephens was at Hoke High School, the school implemented a policy that students caught without their student identification cards had to pay a \$1 fine to get a temporary I.D.

Stephens organized a student protest against the policy, with the students wearing white shirts in solidarity and bringing lunch from home so they were not buying food from the cafeteria.

"I've always had a flair for social justice issues," he said.

Stephens became even more involved in social activism after graduating with the Hoke High (See STEPHENS, page 4A)



High school students were taken to middle schools after evacuation.

## 2,000 students evacuated

### Bomb threat called in

By CATHARIN SHEPARD  
Staff writer

Nearly 2,000 students at Hoke County High School and Turlington Alternative School were evacuated Tuesday morning after the school system received bomb threats targeting both campuses.

"We are not taking this lightly," Hoke County Sheriff Hubert Peterkin said shortly after the students were evacuated.

Bomb sniffing dogs from Fort Bragg did not locate any explosive devices on either campus. Students returned to classes shortly before 11 a.m.

The bomb threat was called in around 8 a.m., Peterkin said. The person (See THREAT, page 6A)



Victim: Blanks

## Shooting was bad drug deal

The Hoke County Sheriff's Office announced this week that it will not file charges in the 2013 shooting death of a man who was killed during what authorities report was a drug deal gone wrong.

Chad Lynn Blanks, 28, was shot October 14, 2013 at a home on the 600 block of Goose Pond Road in Red Springs. (See CHARGES, page 3A)

## Woman charged with identity theft

Deputies with the Hoke County Sheriff's Office have arrested a woman for allegedly lying to officers to avoid legal consequences.

Investigators arrested Tiffany McDuffie, 32, of the 4900 block of Fieldcrest Drive on charges of felony identity theft and misdemeanor intoxicated and (See I.D. THEFT, page 3A)

## This Week



### She's the czar of Hoke food

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## Last day of work arrives for House of Raeford

By CATHARIN SHEPARD  
Staff writer

The last day of work arrived this week for most employees at the House of Raeford's further processing plant, marking the end of the poultry company's decades-long operations in Hoke County.

Tuesday was the last day of production at the plant, which was staffed by more than 400 people. The House of Raeford shuttered its Hoke slaughterhouse in 2013 when it got out of the turkey business and switched entirely to producing chicken.

A minimal group of employees will remain in the shipping and maintenance departments for a few months, according to spokesman Dave Witter.

It's possible that another company could buy and reopen the plant, which was built in the 1990s.

"Multiple parties have expressed interest in the further processing plant, but there is no information we are at

(See LAST DAY, page 3A)

## Santa, lights, live Nativity ready park for Christmas

By CATHARIN SHEPARD  
Staff writer

When her seasonal job with the Hoke County Parks and Recreation Department meant she had to dress up like a Christmas tree, 17-year-old

Shamara Butts didn't hesitate.

Butts joined her coworkers decked out in various Christmas costumes — an angel, a living Nativity scene, elves and more — at the grand opening last week of the first Christmas Lights in the Park event.

Thousands of lights were set to shining at the Hoke County Recreation Complex on Highway 211 south of Raeford as elected officials joined department employees in cutting the ribbon on opening night for (See CHRISTMAS PARK, page 4A)



Above, county officials cut the ribbon for the Christmas celebration at the park. At left, Santa and Mrs. Claus await visitors. (Catharin Shepard photos)



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