

The News-Journal

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Hoke County's newspaper since 1905

No. 42 Vol. 109

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, December 24, 2014

Cape Fear hospital president resigns

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

The president of Cape Fear Valley's Hoke Healthcare facilities resigned this month and will be replaced by another Cape Fear

Valley administrator, the hospital system announced last week.

Officials did not say why Cape Fear Valley Hoke Healthcare President Velvete Jones resigned from the role she had held since 2013. As of the first week in De-

cember, Jones was busy overseeing the final days of construction and the moving-in process for the 41-bed hospital set to open in February.

Dr. Roxie Wells, Cape Fear Valley's Associate Chief Medical

Officer, is stepping in to fill the vacated position as head of Hoke Healthcare. Officials announced the leadership change December 18.

Wells most recently served as associate chief medical officer for

the hospital system, where she was responsible for leading the health system's network of primary care and specialty practices.

"She will continue with these duties along with her new duties (See RESIGNS, page 4A)



Firemen and a passerby try to get water on this fire but they were unable to save a woman who perished in the rear of the house. Two children escaped through this door.

Woman dies, 2 hurt Passersby tried to save fire victim

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Although civilian rescuers and firefighters battled smoke and flames to try and save her life, 70-year-old Myrtle Brewer died Monday in a house fire that also injured two other family members.

Passersby called 911 around 8 a.m. when they spotted flames coming from a home on the 5300 block of South Old Wire Road. Lorene Chavez, 51, and her two grandchildren, ages 11 and 8, were able to get

out of the house. Two citizens who stopped to help tried to get Brewer out of a back bedroom through a window but could not due to the extreme heat and smoke, according to a report from the Hoke County Sheriff's Office.

The South Antioch Fire Department and Stonewall Fire Department along with other emergency personnel responded to the scene and immediately attempted to rescue Brewer but found her dead in the rear bedroom.

Chavez suffered from severe smoke inhalation while trying to get to (See FIRE DEATH, page 6A)



A passerby suffers from smoke inhalation. He and others had tried to save 70-year-old Myrtle Brewer but were unable. (Photos by Ken MacDonald)



House destroyed last week.

House fire is arson, official says

Authorities suspect arson was to blame for a fire last week that burned a Hoke County family out of their home.

Investigators looking into the house fire that happened on Lawrence McCollum Road now have a suspect in the case, Maj. Freddy Johnson of the emergency management division of the Hoke County Sheriff's Office said.

"We have a suspect, we're just trying to locate them," he said.

The family was not involved in setting the fire, Johnson said. No one was injured.

The fire was started in a storage room in the garage area, according to reports. It appears that the suspect set some clothes on fire, and the flames then spread through the garage and into the attic, Johnson said. The house was about a 50 percent loss with smoke damage to the unburned sections of the structure.

The American Red Cross and local donors assisted Candice McCall and four other members of her family, collecting clothing and Christmas presents for a 13-year-old girl and two-year-old boy.

The fire happened in the morning hours of Tuesday, December 16.

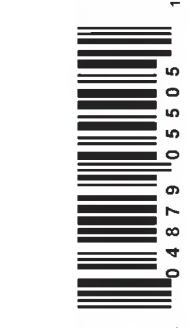
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Teen court is back, helps first-time juvenile offenders

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

A program that lets students learn about the court

system and helps young first-time offenders avoid a criminal record is now back up and running after funding problems shut it down.

Suzanne Maness, founder and director of the Called Into Action nonprofit group that seeks to support local youth, helped get grant

funding to get the program going again.

The program is for kids and teens ages 10-17, both those who want to volunteer

and those who have committed a minor crime and are facing charges, coordinator Sherra Washington (See TEEN COURT, page 4A)



Santa visits all ages
Santa visited 125 patients at Autumn Care in Raeford last week. Here, he gives Barbara Nunn her Christmas gift for being good last year. (Hal Nunn photo)

Beware IRS phone scam

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Audrey McDowell knew something wasn't right when someone claiming to be with the Internal Revenue Service called her elderly mother, demanding money to pay overdue taxes that didn't exist.

"They called her by name and they tell her she owes money to the IRS, and they just constantly call her every day. They've been doing this now for about three weeks," McDowell said.

First it was just a few phone calls, but it quickly became a daily hassle.

"They call every day, twice a day, usually around 9:30 and somewhere around 2:30 p.m.," McDowell said.

Then the scammers starting calling McDowell, trying to pull the same tactic, but McDowell quickly caught on.

"She was saying, I heard her say that she was calling from the IRS and that I was being sued for fraud. When she said that, I hung up on her," McDowell said. "...I called the Attorney General and reported it and I called the sheriff's office and reported it."

One phone number showed up on her caller I.D. as unknown, (See SCAM, page 4A)