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Elections supervisor Shook resigns County surprised by sudden retirement of long-time director



BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Caroline Shook, who served as Hoke County Board of Elections director for more than 30 years, retired from the position in December. Shook informed the

elections board of her retirement at the board meeting in December, which caught the county by surprise, manager Letitia Edens said. Shook started working with the county in October 1985, said Edens.

Hoke County Board of

Elections Chairman Robert Vaughn appeared before the commissioners last week to ask for support in managing the office until the board can hire a new director.

The commissioners approved a plan allowing a part-time employee to work

more hours temporarily until the position is filled.

The county pays for the position of elections director, but the elections board members will decide on who will fill the position. The county will assist in the hiring process, the county manager

said. "We will post the job for them, take the applications for them, someone from HR will sit in on the interview," Edens said.

The commissioners only have to approve the salary request. The entry-level salary for the position is \$43,158.

Men escape burning house

Several homeless men who used an otherwise vacant house on Rockfish Road for shelter narrowly escaped flames when the house burned early Tuesday morning.

The house at the intersection of Rockfish Road and Club Pond Road apparently caught fire due to an accident with a space heater, Maj. Freddy Johnson of the Hoke County Sheriff's Office Emergency Management Division said.

"It was a vacant home. A space heater was tipped over and caught the residence on fire," he said. The fire happened around 4 a.m. Tuesday.

Although no one was injured in the fire, one person was reportedly treated for (See FIRE, page 10)



These men said they woke up to flames as the house behind them burned early Tuesday morning in the Scurlock area. They said another man was hurt by the smoke. (Ken MacDonald photo)

It's dangerous but 'fun', volunteer firefighters needed

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

When the sirens go off, they come running even if it's 3 a.m., pouring rain or freezing cold, and most of them still have to be at work the next day even if they didn't sleep a wink.

This Week

Busy roads addressed in transportation plan
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An Antioch volunteer gets ready. (File photo)

While some of the fire departments in Hoke County are now considered combination departments that have paid staff members on their rosters, most of Hoke's first responders are volunteer firefighters.

It can be life-threatening, demanding, and takes hundreds of hours of training to be a firefighter, and most of the people who gear up to protect homes and lives in Hoke County also have full-time 9-5 jobs and families. Without the 250 volunteer firefighters willing to put in the time and training, the county wouldn't have enough fire protection.

But it's getting harder to find enough people willing to take on the risk, the inconvenience and the time commitment to complete the required amount of training to become a volunteer firefighter. Of every 10 people who show up at a fire station meeting to discuss becoming a firefighter, maybe one or two actually stay on, Puppy Creek Fire Department Chief John Joseph said.

"You're training two nights a week, so that takes

away from their time at home...It does require a lot of time away from home to do that type of training, plus we have weekend training for special types of courses," Joseph said.

"Most volunteer firefighters, when they start out, they have absolutely no idea what they're getting into," Puppy Creek Fire Department Capt. Matt Williams said. "Firefighting is dangerous, and whether you're a firefighter in New York City or in Raeford, you're just as likely to die in a fire. So, there are minimum standards that have to be met."

The "live burn" standard requires about 260 hours of training before a firefighter can even set foot inside a burning house. There are also different types of training, certified training and non-certified training, with certified programs typically offered at community colleges and fire departments offering the non-certified training at each station. And every year, firefighters still have to refresh their training or risk losing their certification.

(See FIREFIGHTERS, page 10)

OTHER STUFF

BY KEN MACDONALD

I heard peanut butter is good for you - at least better than a fast food biscuit - so I've been eating a PB&J for breakfast most mornings. It's a simple meal, one you don't have to think about; it's tasty; and it's, did I mention, simple?

Since I've gone all-or-nothing with this stuff, I've learned to love organic (Food Lion brand) peanut butter, with its lack of sugar and waxy icky ingredients, and organic reduced-sugar cherry preserves—I'm all connoisseur in the PB&J department.

But the bread molds quickly on me, so Monday, on the way to work, I stopped at Food Lion to (See OTHER STUFF, page 4)



Plenty cold

No appreciable snow fell over the weekend but the cold—13 degrees—was sufficient to delay schools Monday. Edward Cummings and Martin Palomares brave the cold to wait for their bus. (Ken MacDonald photo)

Hoke High band offered Carnegie Hall

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

The young musicians of Hoke County High School's symphonic band are getting the chance of a lifetime this spring, but they need support from the community to make it happen.

The band has been invited to perform at the world-renowned Carnegie Hall in (See BAND, page 10)



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