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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, September 12, 2018

In the path of a major hurricane Hoke County prepares for Florence storm impact

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

With a major hurricane in the Atlantic setting its sights on North Carolina, Hoke County officials began preparing this weekend for what could be long-term impacts from high winds and significant rainfall.

The Hoke County Board of Commissioners declared a state of emergency Monday and met in special session the same day, where they unanimously approved a budget amendment that will allow access to funds to help get through the hurricane. The money can be used for things such as overtime pay for emergency responders and emergency repairs to county facilities.

Local officials, including County Emergency Management Director Bryan Marley, were in meetings throughout the day handling preparations.

"Take this storm very seriously and be prepared to be without power or water," he advised Monday.

Marley recommended that residents stock up on enough water, food and other supplies to make sure they can take care of themselves and their families in the initial period after the hurricane.

"They need to be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours after the storm passes," he said.

Emergency preparedness tips from <http://www.ready.gov> recommend having at least

(See HURRICANE, page 10)



Stocking up
Bea Baker, left, an unknown shopper, top, and the Taylor family make some final preparations at Food Lion Tuesday. In big demand: water. Stores stocked pallets, only to quickly sell out. (Ken MacDonald photos)

N.C. Fall Festival, set for weekend, postponed

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

An uninvited guest at the coast has forced the North Carolina Fall Festival's Board of Directors to postpone the annual event, which was scheduled for this week.

"Florence was not invited to the

party," Festival Director Melissa Pittman said Tuesday, a day after the board made the decision to reschedule.

The festival has been moved to November 1-3, with the parade set for November 1, the Stuffin' and Stompin' dinner on November 2 and the big day downtown on

November 3.

It was a tough decision to have to make, but a clear one that needed to be made, Pittman said.

"We just decided that for the safety of everybody – our citizens, the participants, the musicians – it had to be postponed," Pittman said. "We did not want to cancel,

there has never been a festival canceled and we want that to continue."

The festival, which began as the Turkey Festival more than 30 years ago, is now in its third year as the N.C. Fall Festival. Usually festival organizers persevere when lesser bad weather like rainstorms

blow through the area during September, but potential impact from a hurricane is serious enough to warrant the postponement. It's not the first time that the festival has been delayed due to an imminent hurricane.

"We discuss the weather and I

(See FESTIVAL, page 6)

HELP store falls on hard times, to close permanently

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer



Store damage during Matthew. (File photo)

After HELPing Hoke County's citizens in need for nearly 30 years, the Hoke Emergency Liaison Program is closing its doors for the last time.

For decades the charity thrift store operated a

food bank and ran a Share Your Christmas program to help the less fortunate, and relied on donations from the kindness of Hoke citizens as well as grant funding to support its missions.

However, after Hurricane Matthew damaged its building in 2016 and forced the program to close

for a while, the nonprofit just never recovered, HELP Board of Directors Chairwoman Jean Powell said.

"Our funds have basically been going down since Matthew," she said. "There was a lot of damage to the building and we were closed for some weeks. ... We just never have recovered."

Since 2016, the number of shoppers at the thrift store has waned as additional problems with their rented building space continued to cause issues. Longtime director Bonnie Johnson and the board of directors finally agreed recently that the time had

(See HELP, page 12)

Local National Guard Armory named for Johnson

The National Guard Armory in Raeford will now serve as a memorial to

the legacy of a soldier from Raeford who was killed in action six years ago.

Staff Sgt. Donna Johnson, 29, was one of three soldiers who died

in the line of duty October 1, 2012 while deployed to Afghanistan with the 514th Military Police Company. A suicide bomber attacked Johnson's joint U.S.-Afghan patrol in

Khost, Afghanistan.

The National Guard held a special dedication ceremony Saturday at the armory, joined by Johnson's family. The facility located at 305

Teal Drive in Raeford is now known as the SSGT. Donna R. Johnson Readiness Center of the North Carolina Army National Guard.

(See ARMORY, page 6)



From left, the funeral in 2012; the dedication; Johnson.



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SAVE THE DATE! NOVEMBER 1-3
The Fall Festival Has Been Rescheduled!
Parade Nov. 1 • Stuffin' & Stompin' Dinner Nov. 2 • Main Event Nov. 3
MAIN EVENT on Main Street — Vendors, Music, Food, Entertainment
Call 910-904-2424 for more details and information.