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If it happened, it's news to us



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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

Three die, 26 positive in outbreak

COVID-19 ravages retirement center as vaccination of residents continues

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

An outbreak of COVID-19 at Open Arms Retirement Center in Raeford has seen three residents die after testing positive for the virus, according to the Hoke County Health Department.

Testing found a total of at least

26 known cases among residents and staff, according to the department.

So far 14 residents and 12 employees have tested positive for coronavirus since the start of the outbreak, local health officials said. That includes the three residents who have died during the outbreak.

Two residents were hospitalized after testing positive, and died while in the hospital.

A third resident with COVID-19 passed away at the facility, health officials said.

The outbreak was first reported December 30. At the time, eight residents and five employees tested positive for the virus. Open

Arms is reportedly completing its own rapid antigen tests and PCR testing, according to the Health Department.

Despite the outbreak, efforts are underway to vaccinate long-term care staff and residents in Hoke County against coronavirus.

The federal government is contracting with CVS and Wal-

greens pharmacies to provide the vaccinations.

Including the recent deaths of Open Arms residents, Hoke County has now seen 41 people die after testing positive for coronavirus, local officials reported.

The recent deaths include an African-American man who died (See *OUTBREAK*, page 4)

March, services mark MLK Day here



The Hoke County NAACP, Ministerial Alliance and Maggie's Outreach held a march and outdoor celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Monday, attended by members and local elected officials. (Catharin Shepard photo)



State Rep. Garland Pierce speaks Monday during a virtual service honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Screen capture)

'It's how you live'

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Prayers, song and calls to keep the dream of equality and understanding alive marked a special celebration Monday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

The service held at Lewis Chapel Baptist Church West was live-streamed on the church's Facebook page, with only the speakers and musicians in the church building as a cautionary measure due to the pandemic.

Hoke County Commission Chairman Harry Southerland, and Hoke and Scotland County State Rep. Garland Pierce took part in the service. Guest pastors offered prayers and words of support.

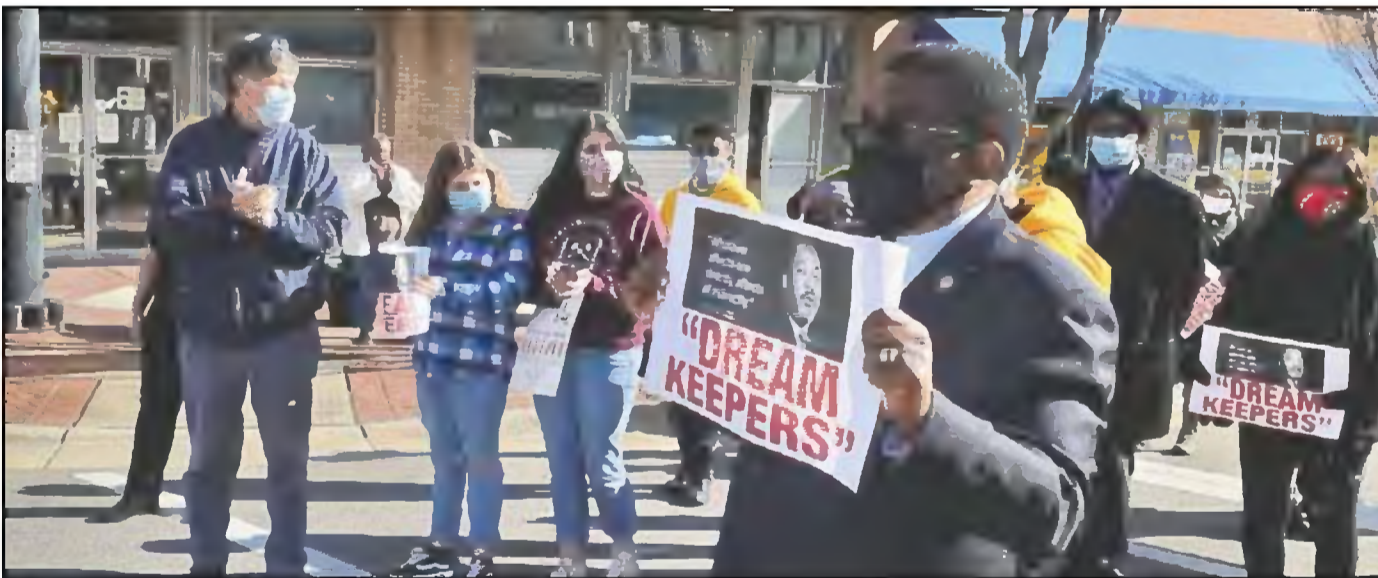
Southerland offered some of King's thoughts expressed in his writings and speeches. "Everybody can be great because everybody can serve," and "If you can't fly, run, if you can't run, walk, if you can't walk, crawl, but whatever you do, keep moving," Southerland quoted.

The commission chairman reflected on King's life, cut short by assassination April 4, 1968.

"Dr. King left us at 39 years old. What I realize is it's not how long you live that matters, it's how you live. For 39 years, Dr. King lived a grand life," Southerland said.

Pastor Andrew Sutton spoke to the late civil rights leader's legacy in the faith community.

(See *MLK*, page 6)



Raeford Mayor John K. McNeill (left) and State Rep. Garland Pierce (right foreground) lead a march down Main Street. (Contributed photo)

OTHERSTUFF

By KEN MACDONALD

Bev's mother died last week, a loss that affected many, I gather from Facebook posts. Bev is one of those people who briefly enters your journey, makes a small—in this case positive—impression, then reappears from time to time in a social media post. Judging from what folks wrote about her mother, Bev came by it naturally. She's a kind, level-headed, gracious, thinking person.

(See *OTHER STUFF*, page 4)

Driver narrowly escapes car submerged in creek

A driver who apparently lost control, ran off the road and crashed into Rockfish Creek managed to escape the vehicle which became fully submerged in the water.

The accident happened on the 7000 block of Fayetteville Road in East Hoke Friday afternoon, while heavy rainfall was passing through the county. Puppy Creek Fire Department firefighters confirmed they were called to the scene of a motor vehicle accident and responded to find a woman standing by a bridge, gesturing to where a car had gone off the road.

(See *SUBMERGED*, page 3)

Schools offer drive-thru meals

After having to suspend its bus stop meal deliveries due to concerns over the spread of COVID-19 in the community, Hoke County Schools is now offering drive-thru meal pickup for families through the end of January.

Families can drive up to any school between the hours of 3:30-5:30 p.m. January 21, 26 and 28 to pick up meals for their children, according to information from the school system.

"Due to the high level of community spread of the COVID-19 virus

and in an effort to protect the health and safety of our school families and staff, Hoke County Schools has made the difficult decision to cancel the remainder of our meal delivery program effective immediately," the school district announced on its Facebook page last week.

All of Hoke's public schools are online only through the end of January due to the pandemic. The district hasn't yet announced whether schools might reopen in February.

Enrolling For Next School Year!

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