



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

It's Library Week

With the signing of a proclamation by Mayor Sarah Tripp, it's officially National Library Week April 14-20 in Shallotte. Looking on are two members of the West Brunswick High School Library Club, Amy Caison (center) and LaDetra Hankins. The club is sponsoring several public awareness activities in recognition of the week, including a trivia contest and a student speaker from UNC-Wilmington.

Southport Men Charged With Larceny Of Goods

Two Southport teens were charged last week with breaking and entering a motor vehicle and felonious larceny.

David Randy Pickard and Timothy Scott Blackmon were each charged by Brunswick County sheriff's detectives following an investigation last Thursday.

The charges stem from an investigation that tracked down around \$930 in property allegedly stolen from a victim's pickup truck.

Some of the items taken included gauges and automotive equipment that was allegedly installed into a car driven by one of the suspects, according to Detective Gene Caison's report.

One of the suspects also voluntarily retrieved a number of the items from their home, the report states.

In other reports on file at the sheriff's department:

■ A truck belonging to Wilmington Grading and Paving Co. stolen from a Route 2, Leland, residence Saturday was recovered by the State Highway Patrol about five hours later. The truck was reported stolen around 9 p.m. Saturday, Deputy Robert Allen reported.

State Trooper W.H. Thompson stopped the 1986 Ford Ranger on N.C. 133 near Southport around 1:58 a.m., but the driver jumped and ran, the report states.

■ Someone threw a rock through a window at an Ocean Isle area home to gain entry Friday, Deputy Phil Bryant reported. Taken was a \$400 microwave, \$250 television set and a \$20 smoke alarm.

■ A window to a home at Connors Mobile Home Park in Leland was broken Sunday, reported Deputy Brian Sanders. The suspect entered through a window and had to exit through a window because the doors were padlocked. Damage was estimated at \$50. No items were taken.

■ Two piggy banks containing around \$125 were reported missing from a home at Smith's Mobile Home Park last Thursday, reported Deputy Richard Long. The banks, glass jars with corks, were on the head board of a bed.

■ Someone broke the glass to a vending machine at the Silver Hill Grill on N.C. 130 south of Shallotte last Thursday and took about \$75 worth of items inside the machine.

Meat Stolen From Local Steakhouse

Two Brunswick County men were arrested last week following a break-in at JR's Steakhouse in Shallotte.

Police Chief Rodney Gause said the restaurant was broken into last Friday morning around 5:30 a.m. A television, radio, cash register, alcohol and about \$600 worth of steaks were stolen.

Shallotte Det. Tom Hunter charged James Edward Pugh, 25, of Supply, and James Elwood Miller, 20, of Calabash, with one count each of breaking and entering and larceny.

Gause said all of the stolen property, valued at \$2,275, was recovered. The cash register was damaged. He said Monday that police were still looking for a third suspect.

County Task Force Wants To Keep Abused Kids From 'Falling Through The Cracks'

BY TERRY POPE

A Brunswick County task force will study programs for abused and battered children in hopes that county agencies can work more closely to coordinate those services. "Its goal is to put the 'protective' back into child protective services," said District Attorney Rex Gore, whose office is coordinating the study.

The heads of several agencies met last week to talk about ways to prevent neglected children from becoming lost within the system.

Representatives from the social services department, sheriff's department, school system, mental health center, Hope Harbor Home domestic violence shelter, The Brunswick Hospital and clerk of court's office will meet again May 7.

Four members will draft the group's purpose statement before then, Gore said. One of the goals is to overcome problems the agencies have in sharing information that could help or save the lives of abused children.

"There are a lot of battered children in Brunswick County," said Gore. "It's a program that's needed. Once we get it going it can really work and work well."

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—Rex Gore, District Attorney

Brunswick County agencies aren't the only ones concerned about how the needs of these children could be better met.

Gore said he got the idea for the task force after reading a series of articles published in *The Charlotte Observer* last month which reported on the problems the system has in protecting children from abuse or neglect.

The articles focused on cases where children had been battered or even died after agencies had stepped in to investigate reported cases of abuse.

"These were kids who had been referred to protective services and sort of got lost in the paperwork," Gore said.

As research for its news series, *The Charlotte Observer* obtained copies of all N.C. Department of Human Resources Division of Social Services reviews of its child protective services programs be-

tween 1987 and 1990.

Brunswick County Social Services Director Jamie Orrock shared copies of a report with DSS board members at their March 25 meeting that discussed data given by the state to the newspaper.

The N.C. Division of Social Services has conducted record reviews of cases where children receiving protective services have died. It is now completing a new routine for reviewing such cases "to offer a consistent and uniform manner in which the Division responds to child fatalities," the report states.

Also, a number of child advocacy groups are trying to establish an N.C. Child Fatality Review Committee, an organization the state Division supports.

In Brunswick County both public and private agencies offer services to abused and battered children.

Hope Harbor Home, a non-profit shelter for abused and battered

women and children, and the county's juvenile services handle a number of cases, Gore said. Many times, the agencies could be working together, but don't, he added.

"There's a lot of duplication of valuable programs," said Gore. "There seems to be no central clearinghouse."

Another goal of the county task force is to overcome the problems different agencies have in sharing important information that might help a child. Some departments must adhere to confidentiality rules that prohibit them from discussing a minor's case with anyone outside of the agency.

A similar task force formed about six years ago in Brunswick County, but it later disbanded. No important information ever materialized from that study.

Gore said he hopes this task force can help the child protective services programs do what they are designed to do, "just try to keep the kids from falling through the cracks."

"It's just an effort to try to get the best for our children," he said.

April is Child Abuse Awareness Month in North Carolina, making it good timing for the task force to organize, Gore added.

Speeding Tickets To Cost More When Plea Bargaining

BY TERRY POPE

Drivers who plea bargain routine speeding charges in district court after May 15 will pay a larger fine.

It's a change District Attorney Rex Gore said he hopes will generate more money for the local schools and make drivers think twice before speeding on the county's highways.

Under the plan, fines for speeding violations reduced under plea agreements with the state will increase from around \$10 to \$49 in the 13th Judicial District, which includes Brunswick, Columbus and Bladen counties.

Such criminal fines and forfeitures are given to local school systems in the county where they are

collected. Defendants also pay court costs in traffic cases, which are \$51.

Gore said he is instructing assistant district attorneys to negotiate the increased fines as part of the conditions for reducing speeding charges. District court judges will still have the final authority to set fines for each case.

"We're not going to reduce every speeding charge," Gore said. "We don't do that now. If a person has a previous driving record, it's not a guarantee."

Sometimes speeding charges are reduced for defendants if they have good driving records, Gore said. In return, the drivers get a break on their insurance bills.

"I want to make clear that this increase to \$49 does not interfere with a judge's right to impose additional fines or less fines in cases which are not reduced," he added.

Gore said he studied a similar program in Buncombe County recently and liked the idea.

"I thought it was a good way to divert some money from the insurance companies to the local school boards," he added. "It will also be a little more costly for those who do get tickets. Maybe they'll start to think that it's best for me to slow down."

Gore announced the idea in a newsletter to lawyers of the 13th Judicial District and also told the Brunswick County Board of Education of his plans at its meeting last week.

A lot of drivers who receive speeding tickets in Brunswick County are not even local residents,

but are motorists passing through the county, Gore said.

"Most of the time, a ticket and a court appearance increase their attentiveness to their driving," he added. "While we could refuse to reduce speeds, I feel we've done our job if we've gotten the driver's attention and slowed them down."

Assistant district attorneys, Gore said, are prohibited from practicing law. Since giving advice about possible consequences of a plea agreement could be perceived as the job of an attorney, the assistants will not

advise people in such cases, he added.

"If folks have questions about possible insurance points, they should talk to an attorney or their agent," he added.

The policy will go into effect in court May 15, regardless of when the traffic tickets were issued.

"I just think it's a good way to get more money for the schools," said Gore. "It could buy some awards for kids who do good things."

Gore took office as district attorney in December.



GORE

CRIME REPORT

reported Sgt. Carl Pearson. Damage was estimated at \$25.

■ Investigators determined a man found dead inside his home near Long Beach last Thursday died of natural causes. Perry Castle of Villa Nova Mobile Home Park had not been seen by neighbors for several days, reported Deputy Ken Messer.

The owner of the mobile home allowed others inside to check for the man, who was found lying on a bedroom floor face down. Messer stated nothing appeared to be out of the ordinary inside the home.

Deputies Answer 1,180 Calls

Brunswick County sheriff's deputies answered 1,180 calls in March, 131 of which involved domestic disputes, according to a monthly report from the sheriff's office.

Deputies logged 89,191 miles, used 6,377 gallons of fuel and took 30 trips out of the county. A transport van logged 1,206 miles.

Officers also made three arrests on drunk and disruptive charges, 14

arrests as prosecuting witness and summoned 199 witnesses. They served 285 civil papers, 331 local warrants, 57 foreign warrants and six mental and inebriate papers.

The department made 150 investigations, discovered six fires and found 28 doors or windows opened. Officers also recovered \$4,049.67 in property, served 59 hours in court on duty and held 41 crime prevention meetings, the sheriff reported.

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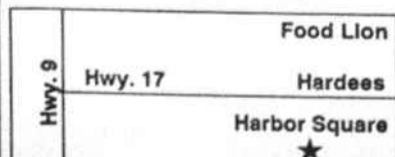
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