



BUILDING AND GROUNDS employee Billy Robinson at work in the future Environmental Health Services waiting area.



STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

## First JOBS Class Offers Hope To Those On Welfare Program

BY TERRY POPE

Fifteen people who receive welfare checks through Brunswick County's Department of Social Services are in class this week, learning skills that may help land them a job and get them off of public assistance.

They are the first clients enrolled in the county's Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS) which is aimed at taking people off the federal welfare rolls by preparing them for the workplace.

Although coordinators have been busy for months preparing for the program locally, Jobs Readiness is the first active phase.

The six-week course hopes to build participants' self-esteem and motivate them to think positively about their futures, says Ginger DeBerry, Brunswick County JOBS coordinator.

"Some, when placed in a structured environment, have simply quit," said Ms. DeBerry. "They've got some old and bad feelings. We're trying to help them see the good and the positive again."

The class will meet at Brunswick Community College, Tuesdays through Thursdays, until Feb. 27. Participants will then move to the

next phases of the program, which includes education courses so persons can obtain their general equivalency diplomas (GEDs) and on the job training.

The Federal Family Support Act of 1988 created provisions aimed at improving the self-sufficiency of persons who receive Aid To Families With Dependent Children (AFDC), the federal government's major aid program.

Welfare rolls have grown to record levels in recent months with the rise in unemployment figures and a sluggish economy. In November, more than 113,000 persons in North Carolina were receiving aid through AFDC, which cost \$281 million in 1990. The total included \$45 million in state funds.

Those who enroll are also offered child care services at licensed day care facilities, which is a benefit to the children, said Ms. DeBerry. "The children will be better adjusted having been with other children in day care."

Targeted for the Jobs Readiness class were five groups of people on AFDC, in the following order:

- custodial parents under 24 who are not high school graduates and who are not currently enrolled in school;
- custodial parents under 24 who are

high school graduates but have little or no work experience in the past year;

- single parents whose youngest child is at least 16, but younger than 18, and who are ready to "age out" of the assistance program;

- persons not in the above categories, but who have been on assistance for 36 of the past 60 months; and

- individuals not in the above categories who are currently on assistance.

"We have people at various starting points," said Ms. DeBerry. "We need to be ready to address their needs when they finish that first phase."

Participants who acquire the right information and obtain valuable job skills can help pass those skills on to a future generation, thus breaking the welfare cycle, she said.

"This is a means to try to get people to make some changes in their lives," said Ms. DeBerry. "Some people are not going to succeed. Some are going to be successful."

A number of county and state agencies will provide programs in the six-week course. Volunteers are needed to provide transportation for clients. Those providers will be reimbursed by DSS, said Ms. DeBerry.

producers who don't routinely make crop reports to the ASCS office as well.

Potter said a producer may not file on one crop on a farm for one year and a different crop on the same farm for the other.

"However, the producer may request benefits for 1990 on one farm and for 1991 on another farm."

Disaster payments will be computer according to provisions of the 1990 Farm Bill. Potter said he expects to begin issuing payments to farmers by April 16.

More information is available from the ASCS office.



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## MOVING IN BY END OF MONTH

# Health Department's Expansion To Ease Overcrowding Problems

BY TERRY POPE

Employees say they are eager to move into a newly-remodeled wing at the Brunswick County Health Department, an expansion that should be ready in a couple of weeks.

The added space will also ease some of County Manager David Clegg's worries.

Patient confidentiality is threatened when the department becomes a beehive of activity, with too little space for privacy with counselors, he said.

"It concerns me greatly that someone looking for environmental health could walk in on a medical procedure," said Clegg. "We have constantly received complaints over the lack of interview space."

The health department will expand into its new space before the end of January. The expansion will allow the department to almost double its square-footage at the Brunswick County Government Center in Bolivia.

Nurses and staff members currently work in the same amount of space allotted when the complex was built in 1977, despite tremendous growth in the department's services and number of clients over the 15-year period. Many staff members have been forced to share offices.

"That will give us what we need for now," said Health Director Michael Rhodes. "It will give us great relief."

A wing that had been occupied by the Department of Social Services before its new building was completed, is being remodeled to provide more office space and examination rooms for the health department. Brunswick County Public Housing has already moved its offices from the Planning Building into part of the wing.

An economic recession has also increased the request for services this winter at the health department and added to the space problems, said Clegg. Therefore, the expansion comes at a good time.

"It's just about to bust at the seams," Clegg said.

The remodeled building will house environmental health services, where residents go to get septic tank permits. It will also contain offices for nurses, medical labs and a conference room for Brunswick County Board of Health meetings. Monday's meeting was perhaps the last the board will hold in the clinic waiting area in the older wing.

"We're really happy about our new space," added Rhodes, whose department has undergone internal movement in an attempt to make better use of available space over the years, but has never expanded since the center was built.

Before social services moved, a number of departments began lobbying Brunswick County Commissioners for the available space. The logical solution was to give most of it to the health department, said Clegg.

"It's a plus for the health department," he noted. "They're going to be able to serve the citizens better."

The expansion will also help the department maintain better security over its pharmacy and give counselors more privacy to work with clients, said Clegg. A cross-section of residents use the health department.

ment, which makes the decision to give most of the space to that department easier, he noted.

"They shouldn't have to feel that at any given moment someone will walk in on them," he said. "If that kept a child in Brunswick County from being fed, it is an issue. If privacy is an issue, then privacy has got to be addressed."

A lot of times, environmental health services dominates the news, said Clegg.

Local developers maintain an ongoing battle with soil specialists over septic tank permits. Other less controversial, but important, services offered by the department take a back seat.

"A lot of people say they don't use the health department," said Clegg. "Everybody in this county uses the health department. They may not arrive at the doorstep for its services, but they do use the department."

Persons who dine at local restaurants or buy groceries from local supermarkets rely on the health department staff to inspect those facilities, he said.

"It's going to hold them for a long time," said Clegg of the additional space.

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