

Highway Honors

A section of U.S. 17 is named for outgoing DOT Secretary Tommy Harrelson. Page 3-A



Welcome!

James Kenneth Johnson Jr. is the first Brunswick baby of '93. Page 3-B



Gridiron Gusto

Aaron Butler is West Brunswick High School's football player of the year. Page 11-B



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118 Workers To Lose Jobs When Sewing Plant Closes March 12

BY SUSAN USHER

Perry Manufacturing Co. will lay off 118 workers when it shuts down its Pelican Manufacturing sewing plant in Shallotte March 12.

The Smith Avenue plant layoff is the largest by a single employer in Brunswick County since Archer-Daniels-Midland purchased the Pfizer Inc. citric acid production plant in Southport, according to Mazie Frink, supervisor of the N.C. Employment Security Commission office in Shallotte.

Most of the workers affected are women with 10 or more years of commercial cut-and-sew experience. Those who lose their jobs when the plant closes will qualify as dislocated workers. "That means we can support retraining for them and they will be eligible for unemployment," she said.

The company did not have a pension or retirement plan and will provide no severance pay. However, offi-

cialists have told plant workers that if they want to transfer to other Perry plants they will be given preferential treatment in hiring.

"It really disturbs me," Shallotte Mayor Sarah Tripp said Thursday. "I think the biggest loss will be the payroll. It's going to put the county's unemployment higher than ever. We can't afford to lose even one job, not the way things are."

The town was notified of the plant's closing last Wednesday, the same day as Plant Manager Jim Saunders and other employees. A hand-delivered letter to the town asked that it not announce the closing, since it had not been made public yet.

Alan Connolly, Perry Manufacturing executive vice president, said in a telephone interview last Thursday that the company "will maintain as full production as we can" and will continue in full operation until March 12.

The business is located in a 24,000 square foot, air conditioned brick-over-block building built and owned by Eskridge and Long of Marion, S.C. Since it was built in 1967 the building has been leased to three different cut-and-sew businesses. The current lease will end in May.

Perry Manufacturing has leased the former Highlander, Ltd. plant since 1983. Based in Mount Airy, Perry is a subsidiary of Marcade Group Inc. of Jersey

City, N.J. In addition to a plant, offices and warehouse facility in Mt. Airy, the ladies sportswear and piece goods manufacturer also owns Pellany Manufacturing Co. in Richlands, La Belle Manufacturing Corp. in Monroe and a plant in Elk Creek, Va. While production is down at some of those plants, none are scheduled to close, Connolly said.

Perry Manufacturing also has unspecified offshore holdings, which Connolly said "has no bearing on this operation or the decision to close this plant."

Pelican was the only Perry plant that sewed "bottoms," the industry term for slacks, skirts and shorts, according to Connolly. "Our plants mainly do tops. This plant makes a very seasonally-oriented garment."

"Basically the company has been unable to sell the product that plant is best suited to manufacture and it's become increasingly difficult to fill the plant's produc-

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"It really disturbs me.... We can't afford to lose even one job, not the way things are."

—Shallotte Mayor Sarah Tripp

Brunswick Schools Rated In Bottom Ranks For 3rd Year

BY SUSAN USHER

For the third year in a row, performance by the Brunswick County Schools rated below the state average and worse than most similar systems statewide, according to its 1992 Report Card issued by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction.

Its overall performance rating was the lowest received by any school system in southeastern North Carolina. However, that rating did not result in a performance warning by the state because the system met state accreditation standards and achieved a dropout rate lower than the state average.

Brunswick County Board of Education Chairman Donna Baxter said last week that school officials are not pleased with the report and are seeking improvement.

The 1991-92 report card reflects the system during the administration of former Superintendent P.R. Hankins.

The first report card reflecting achievement under the tenure of Superintendent Ralph J. Johnston will be issued next January. He is expected to release his short-term goals for improving performance later this month, with longer-term goals due before the end of the current school year.

The 1992 report card provides a three-year snapshot at student test scores and other data related to student achievement. Its purpose is to assess each local school system's efforts to improve student performance, as required by the School Improvement and Accountability Act adopted in by the N.C. General Assembly. The reports are also intended to help school systems identify their strengths and weaknesses,

especially in curriculum areas.

A single rating in the report card combines scores for each of the curriculum areas of reading/language, science, mathematics and social studies, as well as for overall achievement.

Systems are rated as performing on average, above average or below average in student achievement in comparison with all other school systems in the state. They are also rated as performing on par, above par or below par in comparison with similar systems.

Par represents average achievement for a system after considering factors which most affect student achievement such as the education level of parents and how much the system spends per pupil. These factors are put into an "Index of Advancement" to help compare local systems to others with similar advantages, demographic features and economic characteristics.

Systems are also rated on how well they comply with state standards for accreditation. To maintain eligibility for state accreditation a system must meet at least the minimum requirements for 75 percent of the standards and show continuous improvement.

When a system meets a standard's minimum requirements then makes no progress for two successive years, the standard will be lost. One year without progress warrants "warning status."

For the 1991-92 school year, Brunswick County Schools fully met 15 standards and met the minimum requirements for another nine standards.

Among other pluses, Brunswick County Schools achieved a lower

(See REPORT, Page 2-A)



Holden Beach Police Officer Tom Arnold radios an "all clear" as Jeff Leonard steadies the boat in which he and two other men washed ashore Friday evening. Leonard had been out searching for another boat that his brother was piloting when it capsized near Shallotte Inlet earlier that day.

STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

Brothers Wash Ashore In 2 Boating Mishaps

BY ERIC CARLSON

Friday was not a good day to be on the water for the Leonard brothers of Ash.

In two boating mishaps within six hours, Michael and Jeff Leonard both washed ashore on the west end of Holden Beach, wet and cold but otherwise unharmed.

Mike and his friend Grant Canfield of Shallotte Point had decided to take Jeff's 17-foot Kingcraft net boat off Shallotte Inlet Friday morning to look for black sea bass. Both are experienced fishermen who work together on the *Captain Jim*, a party boat out of Calabash.

They were busy watching instruments on the way out. But as they prepared to drop a marker buoy about three miles offshore, they turned around to discover that the aft end of the boat was nearly awash in several hundred gallons of water, Jeff said in a telephone interview Monday.

Mike quickly gunned the 40-horsepower outboard and turned the boat toward shore, Jeff said.

He radioed repeated "maydays" to the Coast Guard and did his best to keep the stern above water. Still, the two men donned life jackets and prepared for the worst.

As they neared the sea buoy about a mile off the inlet, the engine finally quit. With no power and the gunwales nearly submerged, the boat soon turned broadside to the three-foot seas and capsized.

Mike and Grant climbed onto the bottom of the boat and waited for help, Jeff said. They had not received a response to their distress call, so they weren't sure if rescuers had heard them. After about 15 minutes, Mike decided to brave the 55-degree water and swim to shore.

"It was a life or death decision," Jeff said. "There was no sense sitting there if no help was on the way. At first, Mike wanted Grant to stay with the boat. But they finally decided it would be better to stick together."

As it turned out, help was on the way. The

Coast Guard Oak Island Station had received the radio call and dispatched four men in a 21-foot rigid-hull inflatable boat at 11:17 a.m., according to Petty Officer Steve Mains. But because the trip to Shallotte would take 40 minutes, the Coast Guard also called Brunswick County 911 to request assistance.

Holden Beach and Shallotte water rescue boats were dispatched to look for Leonard's boat. Ocean Isle Water Rescue sent a man to the east end of their island, who boarded a Tri-Beach Fire Department boat to aid in the search, according to Brunswick Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan.

At 11:50, one of the rescue craft found the overturned boat near the Shallotte Inlet sea buoy. They also found a life jacket and debris floating nearby. But they found no survivors.

Logan called the Holden Beach Police Department and asked that a four-wheel drive ve-

(See TWO, Page 2-A)

Shell Point May Get Water; New SAD To Serve Calabash, Leland

BY ERIC CARLSON

Shell Point residents were given new hope of tapping onto the county water system Monday night as the Utilities Operations Board asked county engineers to study three scenarios for extending water lines to the area.

The board also agreed to create a wide-ranging special assessment

district (SAD) that would provide water service to several developments in the Calabash and Leland areas.

Bob Black, a resident of Shell Point, came to Monday's meeting to renew his often repeated request for county water. To demonstrate the need, he showed the board a neighbor's water filter caked with what looked like red clay.

"In September, 1990, I brought you a petition with 252 names asking for county water," Black said. "I've been back here quite a lot. You've sent me to the board of commissioners and they've sent me back to you. But we still need the water."

Utilities Operations Director Jerry Webb said he and County Engineer Robert Tucker had been studying three possible ways of extending water service to the Shell Point area.

One scenario would require a new 12-inch main waterline to be installed from the main trunk line on U.S. 17, down Mt. Pisgah Road to an existing line along N.C. 130. This would provide enough water pressure to extend a looped line into the Shell Point area and back to N.C.

(See WATER, Page 2-A)

Merchants Unhappy With Town's New Trash Policy

BY DOUG RUTTER

Some Shallotte business owners think the town's new policy on commercial trash pickup stinks.

"I think all the merchants are upset about it from what I can gather," said service station owner Dykes Hewett. "I don't think too much of it myself."

Starting Feb. 1, the town will pay for weekly removal of one 90-gallon cart from each residence and business, a major shift from the current policy of paying for removal of up to 16 cubic yards of commercial trash per week.

Merchants who generate more trash than they can stuff into the small cart will have to arrange for additional pickup with the town's garbage hauler, Chambers of South Carolina Inc.

"I don't think much of it. I'm not very impressed, and I'm not very happy," said Clint Stanley of Shallotte Body Shop. "There's not much we can do about it. You can't fight city hall."

Aldermen decided last fall the garbage policy needed to change because the town was paying more for trash pickup than it was receiving in taxes from some businesses.

"It's like we're paying them for the right to pick up their garbage," Alderman Morris Hall said during a recent discussion of the commercial trash policy.

Under the new three-year contract

with Chambers, Shallotte will provide the same amount of trash pickup for merchants as it does for residents. Town officials consider the new policy fairer than the old one.

Mayor Sarah Tripp said she hadn't received any complaints from business owners as of last Friday. She said the town needed to make a change to save some money.

"I know that the way it was going we had to do something because we were going in the hole on trash collection," Tripp said. "There was a lot of thought on it. I'm not saying our way is best, but something had to be done."

Business owners were formally notified of the new policy last month, when town employees delivered letters to each of the approximately 100 businesses in Shallotte.

Merchants who don't want to pay for their trash pickup have the option of hauling their own garbage to the landfill. However, a town ordinance prohibits business owners from contracting with any firm except Chambers.

Stanley is among the local merchants who objects to being told he must contract with a certain firm.

Although state law permits towns to grant "franchises" like the one given Chambers, Stanley disapproves.

"I don't like being told who I have to use," Stanley said last week in a telephone interview. "If I have to pay for the service, I'd like to choose which company I pay."

John M. Rodgers, general manager of Chambers, said last week his firm had just started canvassing local businesses to see what kind of service they want. He declined to comment on merchants' reactions.

"Any problems we encounter we will bring to the attention of the town," Rodgers said. He said Shallotte's new commercial policy is "not uncommon" among the communities Chambers serves.

In addition to the cost, however, some business owners are concerned about public use of their trash receptacles.

Stanley said his dumpster has to be emptied twice a week because tourists and local residents dump their garbage in his container. It didn't matter when the town was paying, but now it will cost him

money.

"People out of town come into Shallotte and shop and while they're here they find an open dumpster," he said. "I catch tourists back there in the summer all the time."

Merchants who have problems with the public using their dumpsters will be allowed to purchase locking devices from Chambers for \$75 apiece.

Businessman Leland Massingale said he's afraid visitors and locals will dump their trash all over town if business owners start locking their garbage containers.

"I think it's a mistake on the part of the town to do it," he said. "If there's no place to dump it handy, people are going to throw it on the side of the road or any dark place they can find."

Town officials hope to save money with the new policy, but Massingale said it could cost the town in the long run because employees will be picking up trash.

Hewett, who has been pleased with the service provided by Chambers, said garbage pickup has been one of the few services merchants receive from the town for their tax dollars.

"I don't like double taxation on my pickup here. I think that's what it amounts to," he said. "It seems like they're shifting all the burden over to the small businessman. It just doesn't seem right."

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