

## New Shopping Center For Pamlico County



As the sign indicates, Pamlico County can be expecting three new stores to open their doors next year. The new shopping center will be located on Highway 55 in Alliance.

Developers of a shopping center that has been the center of controversy in the past say they estimate they will be open for business by the spring—but without government dollars invested in the project.

Last year, Bill and Ricky Wilkes approached the town of Alliance with a request that the town apply for an Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) of over \$330,000. The town would then loan the funds to the Wilkes brothers at a low interest rate; the money would be used to partially finance the construction of a new three-store shopping center in the town

which is designated as economically depressed by the federal government. Loan repayments would have reverted to the town and could have been used for other projects.

Local merchants voiced their opposition to the project, stating that they were not against the competition that would develop but were against the long-term, low interest, tax-dollar-backed loan.

A few months ago, however, the Wilkes learned that the application had been turned down for, according to the spokesperson for HUD, inadequate documentation of private finan-

cial commitment.

So in the past months, the Wilkes have been debating whether to go it alone or take in a partner. Bill Wilkes has said on several occasions that he and his brother would prefer to retain ownership of the entire project themselves.

That is apparently what they have decided to do.

Last week, a sign was erected on the \$60,000 building site located on Highway 55 in Alliance, just east of Hookerland Shopping Center, that states that an IGA Foodliner, a Family Dollar Store and a Rite Aid Pharmacy will be "coming soon."

In a telephone interview Saturday with Bill Wilkes, he said that the site is now being cleared and will have to be ditched and drained before construction can begin. He estimated that the first concrete will be poured in about four weeks. The stores should be open for business in April or May of 1985, he said.

Wilkes said that his brother, Ricky, will be moving to Pamlico County to manage the new grocery store and the complex as well as continuing to oversee their store in Havelock. Bill Wilkes will remain in Snow Hill as manager of that operation.

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## Vandemere Block Grant Running Smoothly

With only a few months left in Vandemere's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) year-long housing rehabilitation project, the town's mayor and CDBG project administrator say they are both pleased with the program's progress and expect to complete it on schedule. So far, of the 35 houses scheduled for rehabilitation, 11 have been completed.

The project is being handled for the town by Talbert, Cox and Associates, a consulting firm. Working for them as local administrator is Larry Becker, who oversees the project on a day-to-day basis. Talbert, Cox and Associates is charging \$87,476 for administration of the \$750,000 one-year project.

The CDBG was awarded to the town in January of this year, said Becker. The town had applied, unsuccessfully, on several prior oc-

casions. Mayor Billy Harris speculated that this grant was successful because the target area was condensed. Vandemere's project was ranked eighth in the state, added Harris.

The project has "run real smooth," said Becker. At first, he said, there were some problems getting contractors but currently there are six with contracts: Alligod Builders, Washington, 9 contracts; C. B. Rogerson and Terry Smith, 9; Energy Savers, Snow Hill, 6; F. A. Miller Plumbing, Maribel, 2; Doward Home Improvements, Rocky Mount, 1; and Terry Smith, 2. All but five contracts of the thirty-five have been awarded. Two occupied and three vacant houses are scheduled for demolition.

Although other projects in the county make partial payments to the contractor during the time he is working on a house,

Vandemere's policy is that payment will be made upon completion. Some contractors—who did not bid on any of the rehabilitation work, commented Harris-balked at this policy but it has not, he added, been a problem for those who have actually worked on the houses.

Vandemere established a ceiling of \$14,000 for each house to be renovated. Becker said that this figure has not been exceeded; some bids came in over that figure but items were deleted until the \$14,000 ceiling was reached, he explained.

Harris said that he has had complaints about the rehabilitation from only one homeowner. "It was an awkward house to fix," he stated. Becker added that it was a two-story house, "too much house to try and fix for \$14,000." The other homeowners have been very pleased with the quality of work, they said.

Harris and Becker anticipate that there will be some rehabilitation funds remaining after the homes in the original target area are completed. There are about 12 houses outside the target area that need extensive work, said Harris, and the town hopes to get permission from the state to use leftover monies for as many of these as can be renovated.

As of September 7, Vandemere has received \$131,743 in CDBG funds, \$48,315 has gone to administration. The paving of Schoolhouse Road will take about \$9,800 of the \$750,000 grant.

Harris said that the town has not charged any rent for use of the town hall where the block grant project offices are located. The only purchases charged to the CDBG funds, he added, have been a used desk for Becker, 2 locking file cabinets, and 2 rolls of paper for the copier.



Work on the houses being rehabilitated under the Vandemere CDBG program is continuing; town officials say they are pleased with the project's progress.



Volunteers turned out last week to donate blood, as well as to assist the American Red

Cross in its collection. The blood drive, sponsored locally by the Pamlico County Moose

Lodge and held at their building in Grantsboro, was on Friday, September 21.

## Buck, Popp Indicted On Drug Charges

Two Pamlico County men were indicted earlier this month on federal drug charges. One was arrested recently; however, as of Monday, September 24, the other remained at large. A total of 23 persons were named on the indictment.

Jackie Buck of Stonewall and Joseph Truman Popp of Lowland have each been charged with one count of conspiracy to import marijuana, importation of marijuana, aiding and abetting in interstate travel in aid of racketeering, and smuggling merchandise (marijuana) into the United States. Buck was arrested on September 14. Popp was still at large as of Monday, September 24, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney John Bruce.

Bruce said that Buck posted a \$10,000 cash bond on the day of his arrest. On September 18, he was allowed to change it to a \$10,000 surety bond posted by Robert F. McCotter of Vandemere and Jason Morris of New Bern. No trial date has been set for Buck, Bruce said, but he has been arraigned, entering pleas of not guilty.

If convicted, Buck and Popp each face a maximum penalty of 20 years' imprisonment and a fine of \$50,000.

The indictments were returned on September 4 by a Fayetteville federal grand jury, the charges arising out of attempts to import six boatloads of marijuana into the United States from 1980 to 1982. The indictments remained sealed until federal agents arrested the defendants.

From Raleigh, United States Attorney Samuel T. Currin, in a news release, stated that the investigation, code-named "Operation Pamlico," began in 1981 and has been a cooperative effort of state and federal authorities under the auspices of the Presidential Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force.

As a result of the initial investigation by the State Bureau of Investigation and the Pamlico and Craven Sheriffs' Departments, 31

North Carolina residents have already been convicted in state court of conspiracy to traffic in excess of 10,000 pounds of marijuana. These convictions stem-

ed from two incidents of smuggling marijuana into North Carolina from Colombia, one involving

(See DRUGS, Page 16)

## Four Charged After Argument At Local Store

An argument of an unknown nature Saturday night, September 22, ended with the arrest of four people, including a juvenile.

According to Denny Wayne Lupton, Pamlico County Sheriff's Department deputy, a juvenile and his mother, who Lupton could identify only as Mrs. Watson, entered the Munchie Mart in Reelsboro with the juvenile soon leaving the store allegedly upon entering into an argument with sixteen-year old Tommy Banks. Lupton said that apparently the juvenile, whose name he withheld, "stuck" his finger under Banks' chin and Banks then allegedly hit him in the stomach.

The two then reportedly reentered the Munchie Mart, still fighting. A by-stander, Willie Farrow, 21, then, according to Lupton, asked the store clerk if she would like him to break up the fight; she said yes. Lupton said

that the juvenile's mother, according to reports, then began calling Farrow various names and he allegedly hit her in the face, knocking her to the floor twice.

Lupton said the juvenile apparently then began arguing with the store clerk and allegedly picked up the cash register, valued at about \$800, and threw it to the floor.

The juvenile apparently hitched a ride to Bridgeton where he was treated by the rescue squad for minor injuries; he was picked up there by Lupton. Mrs. Watson was arrested that night at the Munchie Mart; she suffered a laceration to the nose which probably required medical attention, said Lupton. Farrow turned himself in Sunday and Banks, Monday, according to Lupton. All were charged with affray and were released on written promises to appear in district court on Friday.

## Juvenile Jurisdiction Retained In Eric Miller Shooting

The juvenile charged in the Eric Miller shooting appeared in Pamlico County district court on Friday, September 21.

The hearing before Judge Randall Hunter was held in closed session upon motion by the youth's attorney. Two juvenile petitions charged the 15-year old Maribel youth, whose name is being withheld by authorities, with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill and firing into an occupied dwelling.

Assistant district attorney Jerry Waddell said that probable cause for both charges were found but that Judge Hunter decided to retain jurisdiction over the case in district court instead escalating it to superior court. Therefore, the youth will be tried as a juvenile.

Waddell said that the boy's sentence could range from simple probation to confinement in a juvenile detention center until he is 18 years old.

## Citizens Collect \$3,900 For Pamlico Academics

Several Pamlico County citizens have donated a total of \$3,900 to the county school system, which plans to use the gift to improve and expand its computer instruction program.

The contributions were presented to school administrators last week by Rodney Gray and Dallas Taylor, Wachovia Bank officials who spearheaded the fund raising drive.

Those donating various amounts, in addition to Wachovia

Bank, were Bobby Best, Milton Brinson, Tom and Linda Caroon, Bob Cowden, W. Ed Cross, Garland F. Fulcher, Jim Gattlin, Garvin Hardison, Bill and Brenda Harris, Bernard Hollowell, Dr. Richard Hudson, Sherrill Styron, and Roy L. Watson.

Paul Delamar, Director of Instruction for the Pamlico County schools, said that the contributions "came at just the right time." He noted that a primary emphasis during the current school year is to provide basic

computer instruction to all juniors and seniors at the high school.

Schools Superintendent George Brinson stated that the funds will provide "a real boost to efforts toward expanding computer offerings in our schools. We are very pleased that these business leaders have taken this initiative and shown their interest in public education."

Brinson further stressed that business and community support

(See MONEY, Page 16)