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THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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35 Cents

2020 group gets state grant

The Perquimans 2020 Vision Coalition is one step closer to taking the county successfully into the 21st century.

The group received a \$25,000 grant from the N.C. Rural Economic Development Center to staff the county's long-term economic development initiative.

The coalition is seeking a coordinator to assist the coalition and its committees as they strive to find ways to make Perquimans County a better place to live and work.

The coalition produced a plan earlier this year which outlines steps that can be taken to strengthen the county. Areas discussed in the plan include community services development, agricultural and industrial development, infrastructure, human services and tourism.

The plan is the result of many hours of work by a diverse group of county residents. Initial goals set call for specific steps to be taken over a five-year period to improve the economic and social opportunities in the county.

A copy of the plan is available for review at *The Perquimans Weekly* office.

Schools commended for facilities needs study

It's not often that people get complimented for putting in writing that they need over \$11 million, but it happened to the Perquimans County School system.

Schools superintendent Randall L. Henion received a letter from the state Department of Public Instruction commending administrators and the school board for presenting an outstanding schools facilities needs update to the state.

"Superintendent Henion, I commend you, your Board of Education, and staff for a 'job well done,'" R. Mitchel Tyler, School Planning Consultant, said in his letter last month. "Your plan reflects long hours of careful planning and evaluation of existing facilities in reference to additions, and renovations, as well as planning for new facilities."

The board sent a plan compiled by HBA Architects, the firm that was contracted by the board to handle the middle school renovation project. HBA studied existing facilities, looked at projected needs for the future and talked with administrators and staff before committing plans to paper.

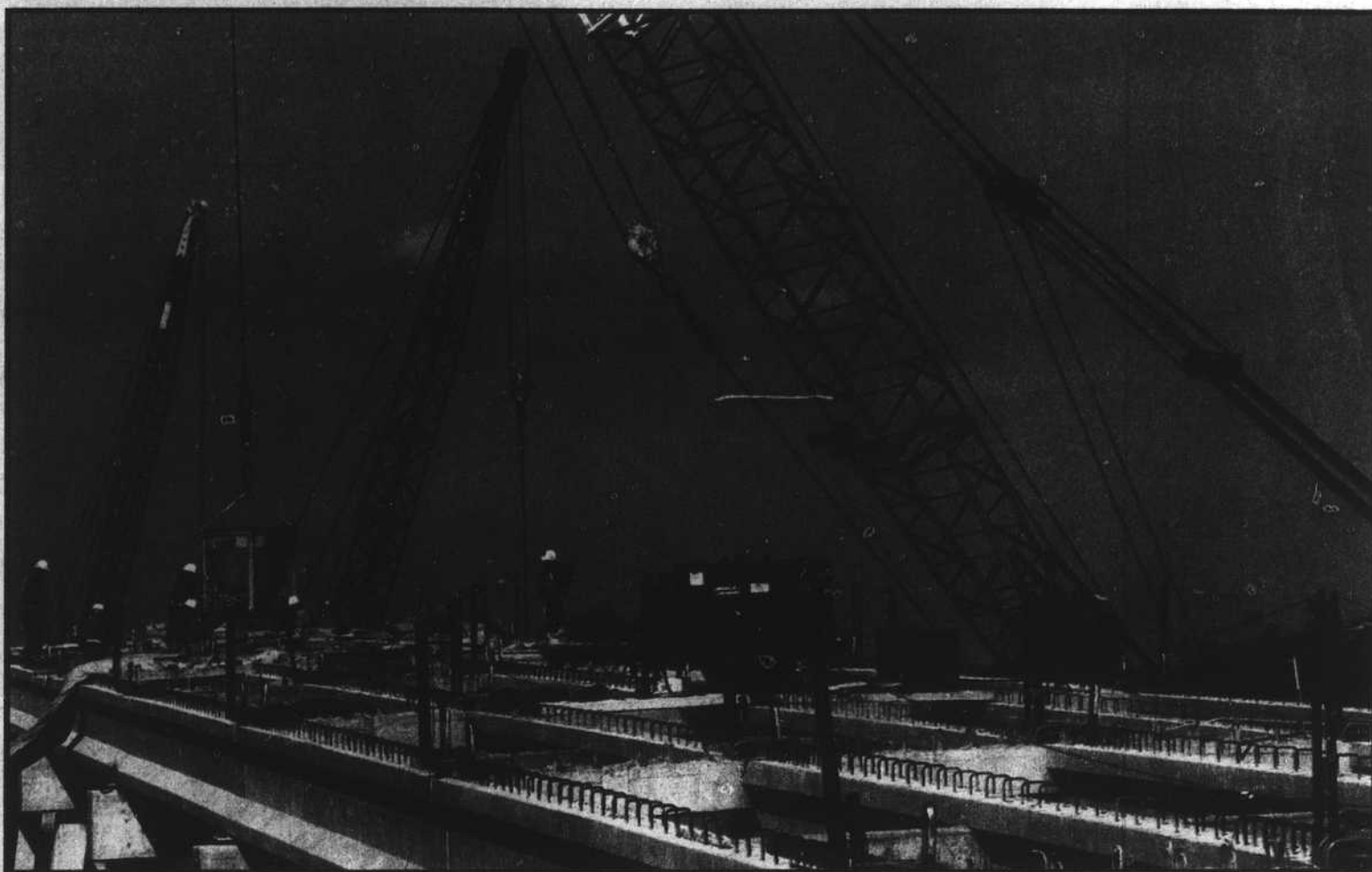
The school system paid HBA almost \$10,000 for the study. Henion told board members when recommending such a detailed study that he felt a comprehensive plan would help Perquimans County be ready to seek state, federal and private funds for school improvement, if any funds become available.

The local plan calls for the construction of a new school at the present Central School site at a cost of over \$5.7 million. Additions and renovations at the county's other schools totalled over \$4.3 million.

The plan included air conditioning all the schools, equipment and technology updates.

According to Superintendent of Public Instruction Bob Etheridge, the state's 128 school systems turned in plans totalling \$5.6 billion.

Working on water



The changing weather over the past few weeks has provided sharp contrasts for workers building the high-rise bridge over the Perquimans River. Beautiful sun-filled days have finally wedged themselves between the cold, rain and ice that made working high above the water a challenge for the construction crew. (Photo by Valerie Stevenson)

Task force operations dent drug traffic

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Several northeastern North Carolina drug dealers have run into a few snags doing business thanks to the Northeast Regional Drug Task Force.

In its first eight months of operation, the task force has arrested 176 persons and charged them with 349 counts of drug violations, and seized an estimated \$288,345 in controlled substances, according to a report sent to task force board members by task force supervisor Lt. J.P. Tade.

Tade reported that 174 cases have been initiated by the group since its formation. Four cases are pending.

Charges include:
*Possession with the intent to sell and deliver cocaine - 135
Possession of cocaine - 111
Conspiracy to sell and deliver cocaine - 28
Trafficking cocaine - 21

Maintaining a vehicle for the purpose of selling/delivering a controlled substance - 14

Possession of drug paraphernalia - 13

Possession of marijuana - 8
Possession with the intent to sell and deliver marijuana - 8

Maintaining a dwelling for the purpose of selling a controlled substance - 4

Manufacturing marijuana - 2
Possession of heroin - 2
CCW - 2

Possession with the intent to sell and deliver LSD - 1

The arrests resulted in the seizure of 637.8 grams of crack cocaine, 368 grams of cocaine, 119 grams of marijuana, 77 marijuana plants, 41 doses of LSD and one gram of heroin.

In addition, four vehicles valued at \$36,000, \$38,323.81 in cash, 11 firearms, a cellular phone, assorted drug paraphernalia, marijuana growing equipment, 40 pornographic tapes and a liquor still were confiscated.

Fifty of the drug charges involved Hertford residents.

The Hertford Police Department joined the Elizabeth City Police Department, Pasquotank County Sheriff's Department and Camden County Sheriff's Department in the task force.

Bus wreck injures 19

The excitement of competing at the Odyssey of the Mind Regional Competition turned to anxiety for a group of Dare County students.

The bus in which they were traveling overturned on U.S. Highway 17 just outside of Hertford around 7:20 a.m. Saturday, injuring 19 of the 20 passengers on board.

The bus, owned by Dare County Schools and driven by Patricia Brown Johnson, 49, of Kill Devil Hills, was travelling south on U.S. 17 By-pass near the Orchard Shop when it ran off of the roadway onto the right shoulder, skidded and overturned. The bus ended up on its side in the road.

Law enforcement officials, Perquimans County Rescue Squad personnel and Hertford firefighters responded to the accident, and got the passengers out through the emergency exit. Some of those injured were treated at local hospitals and released. Others, sources said, were taken to the home of a Perquimans County teacher to wait to be picked up.

Damages to the bus were estimated at \$2,000. No citations were issued. N.C. Highway Patrol Trooper C.T. Griffin investigated the accident.

Propane truck hits ditch in Beech Springs

A propane gas truck slid into a ditch on Beech Springs Road Thursday afternoon.

The truck, owned by Reed Oil Company and driven by Joseph Mark Chappell, 31, of Belvidere, had just turned off of Center Hill Highway onto Beech Springs Road at around 1:15 p.m. Chappell told N.C. Highway Patrol Trooper D.C. Garriss that he met a vehicle traveling south which appeared to be coming into Chappell's lane.

Chappell, who was traveling at a slow rate of speed, according to Garriss, steered to the right to avoid colliding with the oncoming vehicle.

The propane truck hit the shoulder of the road, which was wet, causing it to slide into the ditch.

No one was injured in the accident.

The Hertford Fire Department was called to the scene, assisted with traffic control and sprayed down the roadway after the truck was pulled from the ditch. The Perquimans County Sheriff's Department also responded to the call.

The truck sustained an estimated \$5,000 in damages. No citations were issued.



No one was injured when this propane gas truck owned by Reed Oil Company slid into a ditch on Beech Springs Road Thursday shortly after 1 p.m. Joseph Mark Chappell, driver of the truck, said he swerved right to avoid an oncoming car and slid into the ditch due to the wet road shoulder. (Photo by Susan Harris)

Library begins new program aimed at kids

On March 15, the Perquimans County Library will begin redeeming "Reading -- The Best Start" coupons. Available to parents of any Perquimans County child newborn through 3 years of age, these coupons entitle the child to a "welcome" library bag containing information brochures about parenting, the library, and the county, as well as a picture book to take home and enjoy. The coupons are available at the Perquimans County Department of Social Services, the Health Department, the Perquimans County Schools Central Office, the maternity wards of the area hospitals, and the library.

"Reading -- The Best Start" is a project jointly sponsored by the Perquimans County Library and the Perquimans County Interagency Council. The picture books were purchased with funds made available through an LSCA Youth Mini Grant from the North Carolina State Library, a division of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources.

An experimental program, it is hoped that the gift of the library bags will encourage both library use by new parents and an emphasis on reading to very young children. The program was also designed to facilitate the meeting of targeted goals of the early education and adult literacy facets of Perquimans 2000, a local educational reform study group.

The library has enjoyed success with its *Mother Goose Time*, an innovative language development and enrichment program for young children. Story time is another children's offering sponsored by the library each week. A six-week hands-on science program for elementary school children was held this winter.



Children especially enjoyed story hour at the Perquimans County Library on Halloween. They were invited to dress up and were met by librarian Shelley Fearn in her holiday attire. Programs like these make the library a fun place where children like to visit. Fearn hopes these programs will encourage library use and reading throughout the participants' lives. (File photo by Susan Harris)