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Hertford, North Carolina 27944

Sheriff issues con man warning

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Spring is the season for home repair. Unfortunately, it is also sometimes the season for con men.

Perquimans Sheriff David Lane said he has received reports from senior citizens of what may be con men at work in the county. Lane said seniors have paid about 10 times the actual value for loads of gravel and rock.

"It just breaks my heart, especially when people take advantage of our senior citizens," Lane said.

Lane said he has been told that people have been approached in their homes by men selling loads of gravel and rock. Once it's dumped, they are told the price is \$400 for what Lane said is probably only about \$40 worth.

While there have been no reports of other types of unscrupulous business practices in Perquimans, according to Lane, he has heard of con artists at work in the surrounding counties.

"There are many honest, hardworking people in the field of home improvement," Lane said. "But watch out for dishonest home repair firms."

The sheriff said there are some ways to avoid being stung by home improvement and repair frauds:

1 Be suspicious if someone offers to do an expensive job for an unusually low price. Once you sign the contract and pay the fee, you learn why: They never deliver the service!

1 Always get several estimates for every repair job, and compare the prices and terms. Check to see if there is a charge for estimates before asking for one.

1 Ask your friends, neighbors, and co-workers for recommendations, or ask the firm for references and check them out.

1 Check a company's reputation before you authorize any work to be done.

1 Be wary of high pressure sales tactics, such as people stopping by your home with warnings about your roof being in danger of falling in.

1 Pay by check, never with cash. Arrange to make payments in installments, one-third at the beginning of the job, one-third when the work is nearly completed, and one-third after the job is done.

1 When you find repair people you trust, stick with them and tell your friends.

"Sometimes you might not know you've been cheated until it's too late," Lane said. "If you don't report fraud, you're only helping the crooks, and that's just what they want."

The sheriff said anyone who knows or suspects they have been victims of con artists should call law enforcement immediately.

"Contact the Sheriff's Department or Hertford or Winfall Police Departments, and give them as many details as you can," Lane said. "They want to know about this."

"If we all take special precautions, we can avoid being duped by crooks and also help the hard-working, honest people stay in business."

JEWEL OF AN ART SHOW



PHOTO BY SUSAN HARRIS

Ruth Kemp's "Jewel Box" quilt is just one of the many quality pieces on display at the Perquimans County Library as part of the Perquimans Arts League's first Members Show and Sale. Stop by during regular library hours through April 15 for a look at the creations of many local artisans. You can also vote for "The Peoples Choice."

Commissioners play Jeopardy

Extension uses game show to share information

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Guests at the Perquimans County Cooperative Extension Center's annual commissioners luncheon held earlier this month played extension's version of the popular game show "Jeopardy."

Extension Director Lewis Smith and agent Jewel Winslow were hosts for the question and answer game that provided a great deal of information about the work of extension in the county in an enjoyable format.

Among extension's major projects over the last year were health seminars, nutrition programs, school enrichment projects, 4-H programs, water quality programs, after-school care, Governor's One On One, A&T Creative Programming, Alzheimer's education, care for the aging, farming education and stewardship.

Community health seminars took three nutrition and wellness seminars to 85 minority adults in their own communities. Volunteer health care professionals donated an estimated \$4,000 in services through the project. In a related program, extension sponsored its fourth annual Senior

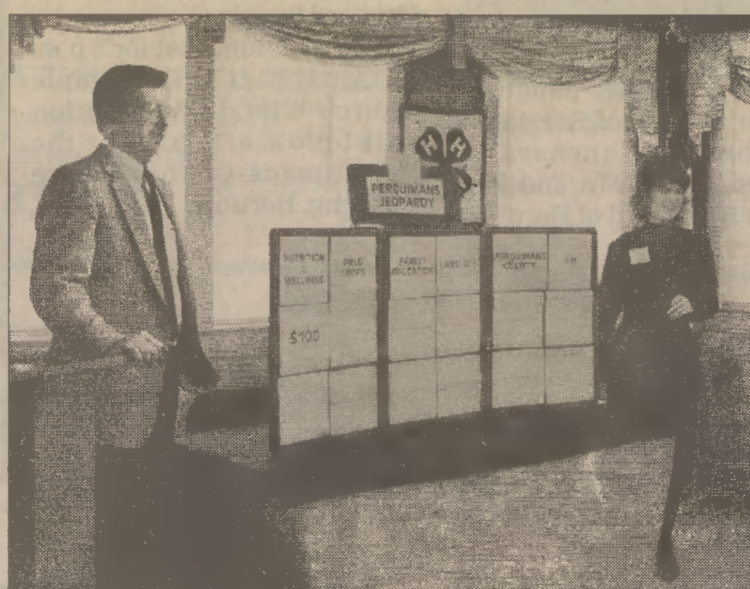


PHOTO BY SUSAN HARRIS

Perquimans County Extension Director Lewis Smith and agent Jewel Winslow host "Perquimans County Extension Jeopardy" during the organization's annual commissioner luncheon earlier this month. Using the popular game show's format, extension agents provided information on the numerous services provided to the community throughout the year.

Day Health Fair, providing the senior population with current health and nutrition information and health screenings.

Health information was also disseminated through the Snug Harbor 4-H Teens Reaching Youth team, who taught the Wonderful Body Machine and Skin Cancer Prevention curriculum.

Nutrition information was also provided through several extension programs. Agent Juanita Bailey developed a local program for third graders on nutrition basics. Volunteer trainers donated about 70 hours of time to the

project, which teaches basic nutrition, food selection and preparation. Student participants' knowledge of nutrition almost doubled from pre-project to post-project testing.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Educational Program continues to provide nutrition education to economically disadvantaged families. A youth EFNEP program helps youngsters learn early the value of good nutrition.

Cooperative Extension continues to provide traditional farm services. Today's extension, however, has expanded its programming to meet many needs.

Interest shown in county's commerce centre

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

The Perquimans County Commerce Centre may be months away from infrastructure completion, but that hasn't kept possible tenants from expressing an interest in locating at the site.

Perquimans County Economic Developer and Planner Robert Baker Jr. told the economic development commission late last month that there has been interest in the center, namely from two boat manufacturing firms. Previously, Baker had told the commission that a department store and home improvement store had made inquiries into the center. Baker has also had contact with two developer/broker firms interested in the property.

Baker said he has enlisted financial support from Electricities, Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation and North Carolina Power which will allow him to develop and print

promotional material to distribute to businesses inquiring about the center. All those who inquire will receive information. Serious inquiries will receive a broader package comparable to those distributed by areas like Raleigh and Hampton Roads. The three utilities companies' contributions amount to about \$15,000.

Baker expects to let the contract for engineering design services in August and present a master plan by mid-September. A final master plan is expected by Nov. 15.

According to the site development flowchart Baker presented commission members, he expects water and sewer extension to the commerce centre to be complete by May 1, 1997.

"You have a nice piece of property out there," Northeastern North Carolina Regional Economic Development Commission Executive Director Rick Watson told the county commission members. "I see a very bright future for you."

Patching potholes is DOT's top priority

RALEIGH - NCDOT's Chief Engineer of Operations has instructed the department's division of engineers to make patching potholes their top maintenance priority.

The winter of 1996 brought North Carolina the most damaging weather in recent history. Nowhere were the effects more evident than on the state's roads. Potholes and missing or damaged lane reflectors showed the destructive power snow and ice have on highways.

"Mother nature dealt us a severe blow this winter," said Don Goins, the North Carolina Department of Transportation's chief engineer for operations. "Every year we prepare for some damage, but this year it was far worse than anticipated."

The NCDOT budgeted \$13 million for snow and ice removal this year, but costs

are estimated at three times that amount to repair the damage.

More potholes were caused this year because of the ice. The pressure applied by the ice along with the continuous cycle of freezing and thawing produced potholes on most roads throughout the state.

Work will continue throughout the spring to patch the dangerous pitfalls that cause accidents and damage vehicles. Potholes will be patched in order of their severity.

In addition to pothole repairs, replacement of lane reflectors lost or damaged during snow removal is a priority. Reflectors are used on 24,000 miles of state highway. Roads in the eastern part of the state lost about a third of the lane reflectors, while the western counties lost 80 percent or more.

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THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
High: 60s	Low: 40s	High: 60s	Low: 50s	High: 60s	Low: 50s
MOSTLY CLOUDY		MOSTLY CLOUDY		MOSTLY CLOUDY	