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Edenton board cans joint garbage plan

GARDEN PARTY/PCRA FUNDRAISER



PHOTO BY SUSAN HARRIS

Guests came from far and near to attend the annual Garden Party, a fundraiser for the Perquimans County Restoration Association. Hosted this year by Julian Winslow on the back lawn of his Front Street home overlooking the Perquimans River, the party drew hundreds of history patrons. Guests

enjoyed refreshments while listening to the music of Wayne James. Monies raised from the event will fund local historic preservation and renovation projects. Chairmen for the event were Mary Alice Brinn, Sharman Haskett, Chris Lane and Jeanne White.

Hertford Town Council seeking updated bids on proposed garbage collection, disposal privatization

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

A proposed garbage collection partnership between the towns of Hertford and Edenton got canned last week when Edenton residents trashed the plan at a town council meeting.

The neighboring towns had worked toward signing a joint agreement with a private garbage collection and disposal firm to serve both towns. Privatizing would be cheaper for taxpayers, the councils believed, than paying for labor and buying and maintaining equipment to continue offering municipal garbage pick-up.

But a contingent of Edenton residents balked at that board's May 14 meeting, causing council to opt out of the proposal. Councilmen there said they were responding as requested by those they were elected to represent, and warned that the decision not to privatize could mean a tax increase in Edenton.

Hertford councilmen seemed poised to privatize at that board's May 13 meeting, but hesitated to act pending the outcome of Edenton's council meeting.

Now Hertford town manager John Christensen has gone back to private bidders Waste Industries and Reliable Disposal to see what effect Edenton's back-out will have on the companies' bids. Christensen said he will reconvene on May 29 to discuss the new figures, which he said will be available for board review before that date.

If council should decide not to privatize garbage collection, Christensen said he will recommend the purchase of a new trash truck in his 1996-97 budget.

The town manager said garbage trucks cost \$80,000-\$90,000. If a truck had to be purchased, the town would probably choose to finance it over a 5-year period. Payments would run about \$19,000 per year.

What privatizing would mean to town residents is that households would receive a 90-gallon, rollable container which would be placed near the curb on the town's once-per-week pick-up day. Both companies bidding on the garbage collection have agreed to continue to offer back-yard pick-up to residents with disabilities.

Make bicycle helmets a riding rule in your household

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Flynn Surratt sounds like a medical professional when he discusses the condition of his 12-year-old son, Daniel. While it's sometimes tough for a lay person to understand exactly what Surratt is talking about, his most important message is crystal clear: If you ride a bicycle, wear a helmet.

The nightmare that the Surratt family has called life for over two years all started because once, just once, Daniel broke his family's must-wear helmet rule.

"It started as simple plans for our 10-year-old son, Daniel," Surratt recalls. "He would leave on Friday evening, February 18, (1994) to spend the weekend in Murfreesboro with his friend, Brian, while my wife, Earline, and I would make a run to Newport to meet my mother and pick up a car she was giving us. No big deal. Arrangements were made to farm out the other kids, so Earline and I were looking forward to a day trip on a nice sunny Saturday.

"And so it was that on Saturday, at roughly the same time we were passing through New Bern on route to Newport, Daniel and Brian were each riding bicycles to a service station—a distance of about three blocks. As Daniel attempted to make a left turn, an automobile behind him moved out to pass. When they collided, Daniel's head impacted with the car's windshield at an estimated speed of 35-miles-per-hour.

"This particular morning, he was not wearing his bike helmet.

"One of our non-negotiable house rules is our bike helmet rule, and with few exceptions, Daniel obeyed this (rule) with little fuss. We later learned that just minutes prior to the accident, Daniel said, 'I'm not

supposed to ride without my helmet.' But since it was a beautiful day with one of his best buddies, and since they were only going to ride a short distance, he took the chance—just that one, single time."

After colliding with the windshield, Daniel was thrown about 40 feet to the pavement, where the other side of his head sustained a blow.

The EastCare helicopter was unavailable, so Daniel was transported by Hertford County Rescue Squad first to Roanoke-Chowan Hospital, then on to the Pitt County Memorial Hospital Trauma Center. He suffered multiple skull fractures and massive, multiple brain contusions. CT scans showed that Daniel's skull had been crushed.

Flynn and Earline arrived in Newport to what they thought was a warm welcome from friends and neighbors. But the look on his mother's face told Flynn that something was terribly wrong.

Hearing the news was not nearly the blow walking into pediatric ICU at Pitt Memorial and not recognizing Daniel as their son would be.

The next few days were a blur for the Surratts. They stayed at the Ronald McDonald House while trying to absorb the extent of Daniel's injuries and the outlook.

The blur became clear focus for Flynn on Friday, February 25 at 11 a.m. when he got ready to go into ICU only to see a group of doctors and nurses at the end of Daniel's bed. The boy had taken a turn for the worse. It appeared he might be brain dead. The doctors decided to wean Daniel from pentobarbital, one of his many medications, to try to determine if indeed Daniel was brain dead.

Flynn and Earline returned to Edenton that day to rumors



Daniel Surratt was in a vegetative state for months after a bicycle-vehicle traffic accident. Surratt broke his family's must-wear helmet rule to ride a bike only three blocks.

that Daniel had died.

The couple had not planned to return to Greenville so soon, but Flynn said he felt he had to go back on Sunday morning. He arrived to better news. Daniel was fairly stable, his color had returned and he took a couple of breaths on his own.

The worst part of brain injuries, the Surratts would find out, is that there are no clear answers.

"You ask questions with brain injuries and you get no answers," Flynn said. "You ask specific questions about the prognosis and they can't predict the outcome. It was the not knowing that was killing me. Will he come back? Will he be normal, vegetative? What does the future hold?"

After five months of ups and downs and very few absolute answers, the Surratts took Daniel home in July. He continued to be in a vegetative state. In September, he spent time in Cumberland Hospital for Children and Adolescents in New Kent, Va. He seemed unhappy there, and the Surratts took him back home. He later spent 10 days in Lenox-Baker Children's

Hospital in Durham, a rehabilitation center that is part of the Duke University Medical Center.

Over two years after the accident, Daniel is at home. He requires 24-hour care, and his father said that's not likely to change. Ever.

He is unable to speak, although he can make sounds. At times, he is able to understand what is being said to him, but his attention span is limited. He responds to people, animals, sounds and the television.

It has been determined that he is cortically blind, which means that while his eyes actually see things, his brain is unable to process the information to tell him what he's looking at. He does appear to recognize his family.

It seems he is able to grasp cause and effect. He sometimes shakes his head appropriately when asked yes and no questions.

He has made a couple of attempts to feed himself with the help of a hand brace. He can swallow thin liquids. His feeding tube is still in place to make sure he gets the nutrition that is vital to keep his

brain functioning. He cannot walk or move himself, although through therapeutic games with a ball, he is moving his arms.

He has been in school half days since March 1995. Flynn said the socialization and stimulation of being around other youth is extremely important.

The Surratts are realistic about Daniel's life. Through research and information provided by Daniel's doctors, they know that about 90 percent of what is recovered after brain injuries is spontaneous.

"He has recovered (physically)," Flynn said. "All we can hope for is that he does continue to improve. There is very little you can cause to get back. The damage that is done is done forever."

The real problem is that the neurons in Daniel's brain are torn. That means that the complicated information processing system in his brain is damaged. The damage to his brain can be compared to a major storm hitting a city and destroying virtually all the roads. While some traffic can be detoured, there is only one way to reach other areas.

Some families of brain injury victims choose to seek long-term care facilities

because of the vast amount of time and energy required to care for them. But that is not an option the Surratts are prepared to explore.

"We never considered a nursing home as an option, nor will we," Flynn said. "Daniel is our son and we love him. We are willing to do whatever it takes to care for him at home."

Daniel will always have profound deficits, but his parents say that does not mean he can't have a meaningful life and be happy. That's what they keep in mind with every passing day.

And while they will not dwell on it because it is not productive or conducive to Daniel's improvement, they are well aware that one simple, relatively inexpensive item could have stood between Daniel's head and the devastating injuries he sustained: a bicycle helmet.

The Surratts don't want sympathy. They don't want philosophical explanations for Daniel's accident. What they do want is to see bicycle riders wearing helmets. Always.

(Editor's note: Please read *The Perquimans Weekly* next week for more information on bicycle safety.)

Outside

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
High: 80s Low: 60s MOSTLY CLEAR	High: 80s Low: 60s MOSTLY CLEAR	High: 80S Low: 60s MOSTLY CLEAR