

# The Perquimans Weekly

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## Durant's Neck Post Office survives

Petition, Jones' help save smallest post office east of Raleigh

By JEREMY DESPOSITO  
The Daily Advance

It may be the smallest active post office east of Raleigh, but Durant's Neck had enough clout to fight off efforts to close the mail center this month.

When word spread recently that the Postal Service hadn't renewed the local post office contract, residents sent a petition to Rep. Evan Clayton, D-N.C., requesting that the office be kept open.

The expected closing date was Jan. 12, and a district change putting Perquimans County in the 3rd District represented by Walter B. Jones, R-N.C., at the beginning of the year, delayed action. After receiving the news from Clayton's office, however, Jones encouraged the Post Service to grant a six-month extension to "help ensure a possible future renewal."

A spokeswoman for Jones' office said they were shocked at how quickly the Postal Service granted the extension.



Daily Advance photo

At 28 square feet, the Durant's Neck Post Office in Perquimans County may be one of the smallest post offices in the country. Located inside the New Hope Country Store, the tiny post office recently got a new lease on life. Residents learned that, thanks to U.S. Rep. Walter B. Jones' help, it will not be closed as U.S. Postal Service officials had originally planned.

Housed in the New Hope Country Store, the 28-square-foot post office is the "last example of a rural post office in Eastern North Carolina," Jones said. Established in 1830, the office contains 32 individual boxes for patrons and services daily mail to 13

customers. Perquimans County considers Durant's Neck Post Office among one of its historical locations, according to Jones, and it is trying to maintain it as part of the Heritage Tourism Program under the North Carolina Department of Commerce's

Division of Tourism.

Jones continued, "Helping to preserve this special part of our history is as important to the Perquimans County communities as it is to the entire district."

Lee Stallings, who currently leases the building housing the

post office, said six months will be enough time to file paperwork and switch the title to his name.

"As far as I know, I'm buying the building in June," Stallings said. "The Postal Service will bypass some of the paperwork, so I understand."

The tiny post office is convenient for the out-of-the-way community, whose residents would have to travel 15 miles to either Elizabeth City or Hertford to the next nearest post office, Stallings said.

Stallings said his lack of ownership of the building was the cause for the planned closure. He said the Postal Service's decision was "kind of a way of getting rid of it."

"I'm pleased we were able to get this extension," Jones continued. "The postal authorities indicated that they are confident the contract will be awarded and the Post Office will remain open and functional in the years to come."

Jones said Stallings will have the option to purchase the building after July 1, and his subsequent position as postmaster will secure continued business at the tiny post office.

## Meals program needs helpers

By SUSAN R. HARRIS  
Editor

Just one hour a month of volunteer time could help ensure that some homebound senior citizens get the nutrition they need.

Myra Mock, Volunteer Administrator with the Albemarle Commission, said volunteers are vital to the nutrition for the elderly program. And while she really appreciates those who contribute an hour each week to the program, being able to count on someone to lend a hand an hour each month is also a boost, she said.

Mock said she is aware there are those who may be unable to pledge a lot of time to the meals program due to work schedules and other conflicts. Some potential volunteers think they have to sign up for weekly stints, she said, and she's trying to get the word out that the program needs volunteers no matter how much time they can devote. Stand-bys are also needed.

"Let's say a Sunday school class decides to deliver on the third Wednesday of each month," Mock said. "That would be great. It wouldn't be a burden on any one person because they could take turns. They could even assign two people to deliver each time, maybe one to drive and one to run the meals in. That way, if one or the other got sick or had an emergency, there is always someone to deliver."

Five days a week, the nutrition program operates in Perquimans and the nine other counties served by Albemarle Commission. Here, an average of 26 meals are served at the Senior Center and about 40 are delivered on three routes. Twenty volunteers assist with the program.

Anyone age 60 or over may be served at the Senior Center. Those receiving home-delivered meals must be 60 or over and meet the program definition of "homebound." Spouses and other caregivers of the homebound may also qualify for a meal. Neither component of the program is based on income. However, funds and volunteers must be available to add new deliveries to the home-delivered list and to add meals at the congregant site. If routes are full, those determined to be eligible for home-delivered meals go on a waiting list.

Perquimans is budgeted for 38 home-delivered and 33 congregant meals each weekday through a combination of local, state and federal funds. It is suggested that those who get meals donate 75 cents per meal if they are financially able. The program also accepts other donations. The contributions stay in the county in which they are collected, and are used to increase the meal allotment.

Mock is trying hard to get the word out that volunteers are vital to the program. She'll speak to church and civic groups and to businesses, and will set up a booth at fairs and other events to let people know about the nutrition program administered by the Albemarle Commission. For information, call Mock at 426-5753, ext. 113.

## GED, AHS classes set

COA is offering free GED classes in Perquimans County.

GED and AHS classes are available at Perquimans County High School and Perquimans Learning Center for those who would like to earn their high school equivalency certificate or obtain a high school diploma. Also, adults who would like to learn to read or improve their reading skills may enroll at the center.

Enrollment guidelines for Basic Skills classes have changed. Students, regardless of educational attainment, may attend Basic Skills classes to study any area in which they feel they need help. No cut-off scores are required for enrollment. High School students are also eligible to enroll.

Classes are being offered at Perquimans County High School, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6-9 p.m. and at Perquimans Learning Center, Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Both sessions end on May 13.

Details are available by calling 335-0821, ext. 2250, or visiting the class site to talk with the instructor.

## New band strikes up at middle school

6th grade band back after 8-year hiatus

By SUSAN R. HARRIS  
Editor

These days when the band strikes up at Perquimans Middle School, sixth graders get a chance to make some noise.

Sixth grade band was added to the curriculum at the middle school Monday. Students were allowed to sign up to take band during their exploratory periods. Those who signed up will attend instrumental music class each day, according to Perquimans Middle School Principal Anne White. Perquimans County Schools Director of Instrumental Music David Ziemba is instructing the sixth grade in addition to the seventh and eighth grade classes.

Ziemba held an information meeting for parents last week in preparation for the new program.

The school board approved using available state funds to hire a second band instructor for the second semester of the

1998-99 school year in December. Christopher Whitehurst, formerly an interim percussion instructor for the Marching Pirates, was hired earlier this month to fill that slot. Whitehurst will teach at the high school.

Ziemba has lobbied for a second band instructor position for several years due to strong student interest in the music program. Increasing enrollment at both the middle and high school levels forced the system to begin band in the seventh, rather than the sixth, grade in 1990-91.

Last fall, Ziemba and Band Booster officers spoke with the board about the need to add additional faculty in the band program due to its growth.

While board members okayed the available state funds for an instrumental music position, they also made it clear that the position is interim. If the school district loses the state position next year through a decrease in average daily membership this year, it may not be filled with local funds, board members said in December.

In the meantime, sixth graders, their parents and middle school faculty and staff



Perquimans County Schools Director of Instrumental Music David Ziemba (right) speaks with sixth grade parents about the new band program for that grade level. Sixth graders began taking band Monday for the first time in over 8 years.

are enjoying the first few days of the expanded musical program at the school.

To obtain instruments for students who otherwise will be unable to join the band, an instrument drive is underway. A call is out to those willing to donate used instruments to the program.

Also, individuals, clubs, organizations, churches or businesses may donate new instruments in honor or in memory of a special person.

The instruments will become the property of Perquimans County Schools and will bear the inscription of the donor and honoree.

Donations of any size are being accepted and will be pooled to purchase instruments.

All donations are tax deductible.

For information on donating to the band program, call Christy Boyce at the middle school at 426-7355.

## McKay takes over reigns as COA president on Feb. 1

7th president former VP at Guilford Tech

Dr. Sylvester McKay, Vice President for Curriculum and Instructional Technology at Guilford Technical Community College, has been hired by College of The Albemarle's Board of Trustees as the college's seventh president.

Dr. McKay, who will begin his new position Feb. 1, replaces Dr. Larry Donnithorne, who left COA in June of 1998 to become the president of Colorado Christian College in Denver, CO.

Dr. McKay has served as the Vice President for Curriculum and Instructional Technology at Guilford Tech since 1993. While at Guilford Tech, he also served as the Director of Research and Planning. Before his employment at Guilford Tech, Dr. McKay served as the Director of Research for the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges. Dr. McKay has also served the North Carolina Community College System in the classroom. He was a Department Chair and psychology instructor at Wilson Technical Community College.

Under Dr. McKay's leadership at Guilford Tech, the school added five new degree programs and developed more

than 20 collaborative agreements with other community colleges. The college has accredited numerous health and engineering technology programs, and expanded articulation agreements with the public schools and four-year colleges. GTCC has developed strong linkages to business and industry in the community.

Dr. McKay has considerable experience in the area of distance learning. He has presented papers on the subject to the League for Innovation in the Community College, Computers on Campus National Conference, Conference on Information Technology, and North Carolina Community College

Association of Instructional Administrators. He was also a member of the Distance Learning Task Force for the North Carolina Community College System.

Dr. McKay's affiliations include membership in the Association of college Administration Professionals, North Carolina Council on Black American Affairs, North Carolina Association of Community College Instructional Administrators, and the National Association of College Administrators. He has also been active in the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. McKay is a three-time graduate of North Carolina State University. He earned a B.S. degree in psychology from

the school in 1975. In 1983 Dr. McKay received an M.S. degree in psychology from N.C. State. He went on to complete his Ph.D. in school psychology from N.C. State in 1990. He also has done graduate work at Washington State University. In 1998, Dr. McKay graduated from the Executive Leadership Institute, League for Innovation in Community Colleges, and in 1995 he graduated from the Community College Leadership Institute of the North Carolina Community College System and North Carolina State University. Dr. McKay is also a graduate of the North Carolina Community College System Executive Management and Leadership Institute.