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Hunter to be honored in May 911 system improved

Kick-off of Hunter ALS Foundation planned for Old Timer's Day

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

He's always been there when the community needed him. And now, Jim "Catfish" Hunter's community is rallying around Perquimans County's favorite son.

The annual Old Timer's Day

activities this year will serve as a kick-off for the Jim "Catfish" Hunter ALS Foundation. Former major league baseball players and associates of Hunter will be invited to participate in a tribute to Hunter's personal and professional life.

The creation of the foundation is being spearheaded by the Bear Swamp-Beech Springs Ruritans, the community service organization that operates in the community in which Hunter lives. The Ruritan Club has enlisted the support of the Perquimans

County Athletic Boosters, sponsors of the Old Timer's Day events, the Chamber of Commerce, the Hertford Downtown Merchants Association, county Ruritan Clubs and fire departments, the North East Partnership and local governments.

Monday, the Perquimans County Commissioners agreed to proclaim May 8 Jim "Catfish" Hunter Day in the county in preparation of the event. Bear Swamp-Beech Spring Ruritan spokesperson Ed Nixon told the commissioners that a request will also be

made of Gov. Jim Hunt to proclaim the day in North Carolina. The towns of Hertford and Winfall will also be asked to join in the proclamation.

Hunter was diagnosed with ALS in late 1998 after having medical tests run at Johns Hopkins Medical Center in Baltimore. The New York Post broke the story Nov. 8.

ALS, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, is a degenerative neurological condition of the nerve cells that control muscular movement. It usually leads to paralysis and death.

"Jimmy's always done so much for this community and people here want to do something for him," Nixon told the county commissioners. "This is our way of giving to him for all he's done for us."

A steering committee put together by the Ruritans and Athletic Boosters anticipates having details of the event outlined by mid-February. The Chamber has agreed to put the information on its website at Perquimans.com. The committee anticipates entering the initial information by the third week in February.

Enhanced 911 should be here by year end

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Emergency response improved in Perquimans last month when all 911 calls from telephones in the county were directed to the Perquimans Communications office.

Homeria Jennette, head of the county's communications department, gave that information to county commissioners Monday in an update of departmental activities.

Jennette said that when Perquimans first went on the 911 system, only those 911 calls dialed from a telephone number with a 426 prefix automatically went to Perquimans Communications. As Chowan and Pasquotank went to selective routing and Perquimans prepares for the enhanced 911 system, improvements were made through the telephone company that now route all 911 calls placed from inside Perquimans County to this county's communications system.

Jennette said Tuesday that the improvements could save a life. Before the enhancements, callers from telephones with 264 prefixes were dispatched to Pasquotank County, rather than Perquimans. The calls were answered and routed to Perquimans, but time was lost in the transfer. With selective routing, contact will be direct and therefore, faster. And emergency responders say that every minutes counts in an emergency situation.

The system will improve even more with the implementation of the enhanced or E-911 system. Once fully implemented, a 911 operator will be able to tell the physical address from which an emergency phone call is placed. County Manager Paul Gregory said this information is critical if someone can dial 911 but is unable to communicate further with dispatch personnel. Simply placing the call can send help with E-911.

Implementation of E-911 is a step closer to reality thanks to a vote by the commissioners Monday. The board opted to retail ASI Landmark, the company hired to map the county, to address the county at a cost of about \$50,000. Gregory said last month it could take up to 18 months for county employees to have time to complete the addressing. He said Monday that ASI should be able to finish addressing within 6 months of signing a contract with the county.

Mapping equipment will also be purchased. Funds for the equipment have been set aside each year for the mapping/addressing/E-911 project. Part of the funds are collected through a 50 cents surcharge on telephone bills in the county each month. Those funds will be used to help defray the cost of equipment that must be purchased in order for E-911 to work.

County residents who live on rural routes will get a change of address when the project is complete. Every residence will have a street address.

If all goes according to the present schedule, the addressing and E-911 could be complete by year end.

Holiday Island may become town

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

It's not really an island, but it may become a town.

A petition signed by 68 registered voters who reside in the Holiday Island subdivision has been submitted to the North Carolina General Assembly. The petitioners want to incorporate the residential sections of the Holiday Island Subdivision as the Town of Holiday Island. Final submission of the petition will be made to the Assembly's Joint Commission on Municipal Incorporations on Feb. 18.

Under state law, a town may be incorporated only by act of the General Assembly, according to information from the Institute of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The General Assembly may make an incorporation effective immediately, or it may require the approval of the area's residents. According to Institute literature, the General Assembly may decide whether a referendum will be held. "Local voters have no inherent constitutional right to approve an incorporation," states the Institute's incorporation booklet.

Should the General Assembly require a referendum, only voters registered in Perquimans County who reside in the subdivision would be eligible to vote. Property owners not living in Holiday Island full time would not get to vote.

That fact caused immediate opposition to incorporation after a group of Holiday Island residents formed a task force last spring to study the consequences of incorporation. Stan Busted said at that time that not being eligible to vote on the issue would mean for some property owners taxation without representation. This would hold true not only for any required incorporation referendum, but also for elections for town council representatives who would set tax rates for all property owners.

Proponents of incorporation told The Perquimans Weekly earlier in the process that there are concerns in the subdivision they feel could best be handled through a municipal government.

Pat Phillips said the main advantage of incorporating would be that Holiday Island could qualify for state and possibly federal grants to help improve the community. Powell Bill funds, monies set aside by the state for municipalities to use for road repair, could help Holiday Island, Phillips said. Task force members estimate the town would receive about \$80,000 from the Powell Bill if incorporated.

Ken Ries, another leader in the task force, said this sum-

mer there are several advantages to incorporation.

Ries said because HIPOA lacks the power to raise money, the only funds HIPOA can legally collect is the \$36 per year per lot assessment to maintain common property in Holiday Island as stipulated in the property deeds. In addition to the difficulty HIPOA has in collecting assessments from some property owners, Ries said the assessments are insufficient to maintain common property in the community, which includes a clubhouse, pool, marina, tennis courts, park, pier, bulkhead and public safety building. Both Phillips and Ries said some of these facilities are in dire need of improvement.

HIPOA would continue to own the subdivision's common property even if Holiday Island becomes a municipality; however, Ries said perhaps the town and HIPOA could work out a lease agreement that would allow improvements to be made with tax money collected by the town.

Ries also said a municipal government could fund such services as garbage collection and law enforcement. In addition, ordinances could be passed to help with problems in the community such as junk vehicles. Now, Ries said, the only way to enforce covenants dealing with issues such as junk vehicles is for one resident to take another to court.

Ries admitted that there are disadvantages to incorporating such as adding an additional lawyer of government and more taxes. But he argued that the benefits would outweigh the additional bureaucracy.

True White and Margaret Meekins are also against incorporation. The two women said that the present HIPOA Board of Governors is split down the middle on the incorporation issue. If six residents elected to a board by fellow residents cannot agree on issues as HIPOA representatives, they will not be able to agree as town council representatives, White and Meekins argue.

The two are not just voicing their opposition. They are presently canvassing Holiday Island and have the signatures of 278 property owners — 134 of them registered voters — against incorporation. There are 385 registered voters in Holiday Island. The women said they want to educate all residents to the realities of incorporation consequences.

"People need to make their voices heard, to take a stand (against incorporation)," White said. "It's not going to solve our problems."

White said she does not believe a municipal government can operate as cheaply as proponents claim — on about \$139,500 per year.



Daily Advance photo

Perquimans Cooperative Extension Agent Juanita Bailey (left) hands out samples of her homemade soyprize bread during the 18th annual Soybean Festival at the K.E. White Center Thursday night. More than 400 farmers and businesspeople attended the event, an annual celebration of the soybean.

Beans in spotlight at festival

Farmers praised for faith, stewardship and acceptance of life changes

By JANET HILL SPENCER
Currituck Advance Editor

The tiny soybean, processed and milled for the first time in Pasquotank County, drew the spotlight Thursday night at the 18th Annual Soybean Festival.

"The Beauty of Soybeans," theme for this year's festival, saluted the heritage and the economic impact of soybeans. The festival was sponsored by the Albemarle Area Agribusiness Council and the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service of Camden, Currituck, Pasquotank and Perquimans counties.

A crowd of over 400 farmers,

officials and area residents crowded into the K.E. White Center for the event which included a catered barbecue dinner and other festivities.

"Faith of the Farmers" was the topic of guest speaker Rev. Mack McMillan, former pastor of Riverside United Methodist Church.

Quoting from a Greek philosopher, McMillan said that nothing is permanent except change. A farmer is used to change being constant and a challenge each day. But, their faith in God keeps them going.

"As a group, farmers are an extremely faithful group," McMillan said.

"...We grow in our faith when it is tested," McMillan said. "adding that a farmer's faith is constantly being tested. But, everyone can be assured that God's love is constant - it never changes," he said.

Other events included awards and recognitions.

Michael Twiddy of the Albemarle Area Agribusiness Council, presented awards to the soybean yield contest winners for 1998. Winners included: JoAnn Smith, Currituck County, 61.5 bushels per acre; Paul Smith Jr., Perquimans County 54.9 bushels per acre; Glen Pendleton, Pasquotank County, 58.7 bushels per acre; and J.C. Rountree, Camden County 59.9 bushels per acre.

Marjorie Rayburn area specialized agent of integrated pest management (IPM), talked briefly about the meaning of IPM and how farmers are involved in pest control. Rayburn presented a special award to Lenon Madre of Pasquotank County for his work in pest management.

The event also included exhibits and food demonstrations by the local extension clubs and entries from the fourth-graders youth poster contest emphasizing "The Beauty of Soybeans."