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## Downtown awning collapses

ALICE BREWIN  
Staff Writer

Some residents who live near downtown Hertford were startled by a loud, crashing sound late last Tuesday night.

The noise was the sound of the awning of The Wishing Well collapsing under the weight of bricks falling from high up the building's front wall.

"It sounded like a bomb went off," said a man who lives close to downtown.

The collapse occurred sometime after 11 p.m. on Dec. 10. A brick facing fell, taking the wood-shingled awning in front of The Wishing Well with it. Fortunately, the timing of the incident was late in the evening and no one was hurt.

"I feel very fortunate that it happened at night," said property owner Erie Haste the morning after the incident. "We are cleaning it up and we will have the store open and the area safe by this afternoon."

Mary White, owner of The Wishing Well, echoed Haste's sentiments.

"I am really glad no one was hurt," White said. "Everything will be back to normal as soon as this is cleaned up."

The incident occurred less than a week after Caroling on the Green and the Christmas parade brought crowds to downtown Hertford.

The clean-up was complete by Wednesday afternoon.

Haste said he planned to pay for the cost of the clean-up.

"It's not the insurance company's responsibility to pay for something like this... it's a structural thing," Haste said.

The damaged building once housed the State Theater, and, like many of downtown Hertford's old buildings, has its share of woes which Haste attributes to its flat-roofed design. Haste believes sleet from the ice storm may have forced water up into the brick facing, subsequently freezing and expanding in cracks. He theorized this expansion could have caused the brick facing to collapse.

Besides repairing the facing and replacing the destroyed awning, Haste has plans to replace the remaining awning in front of Hertford Hardware as well.

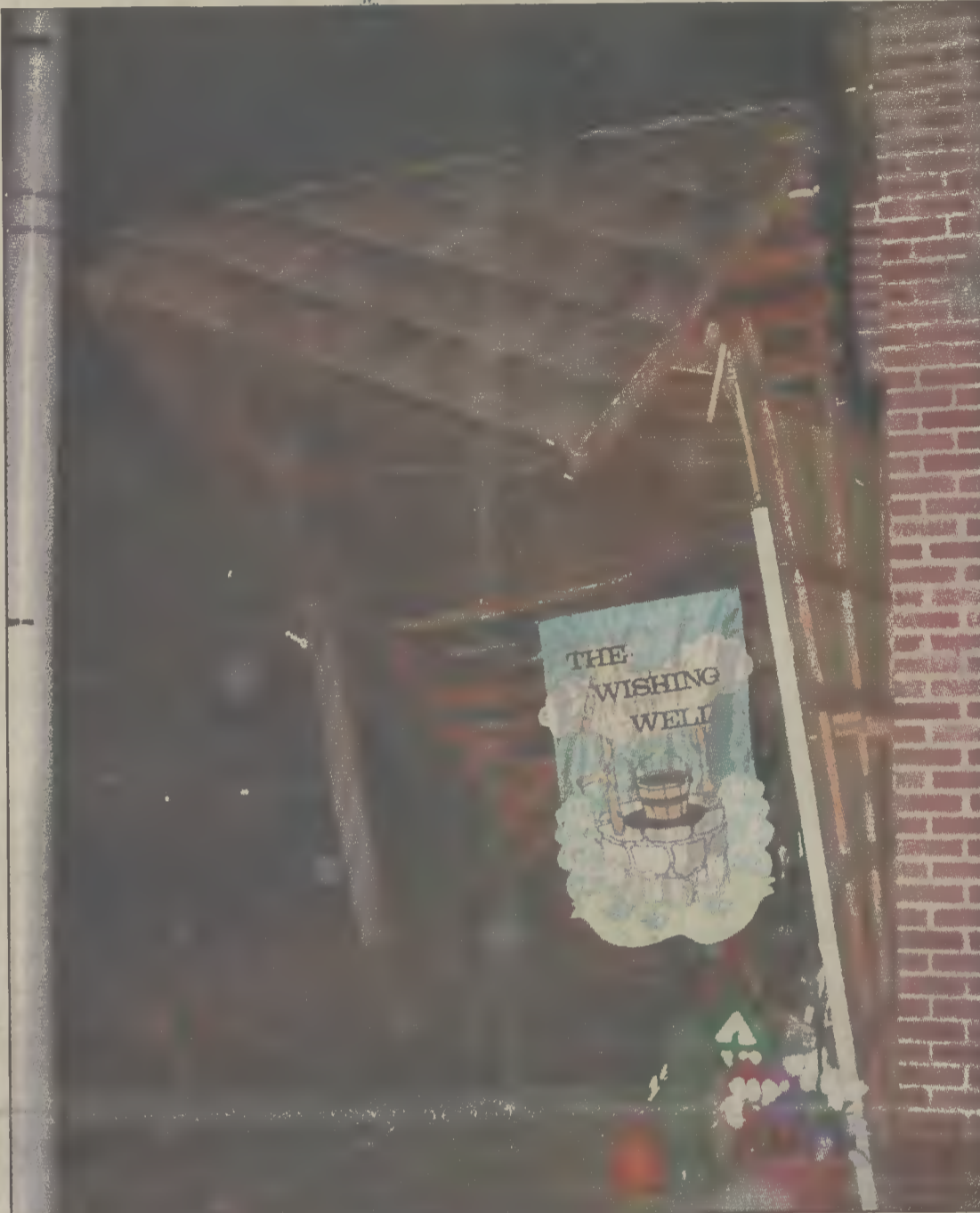
Haste claims the building is now "very structurally sound."

According to Town Manager John Christensen, who also serves as the town's code enforcement officer, maintaining old buildings like the ones downtown is basically up to the property owner.

Virgil Parrish, Perquimans County Building Inspector, said state law does not require inspection of old buildings.

The shingled awning in front of The Wishing Well in downtown Hertford crashed onto the sidewalk and in the street late Tuesday night. Workmen stayed busy most of Wednesday cleaning up the sidewalk and street. By late afternoon, the debris was cleared away, but the building had a decidedly different look.

PHOTOS BY ALICE BREWIN



## Schools replacing heating elements

SUSAN R. HARRIS

Perquimans County Schools is replacing over 40 heat exchangers on HVAC units at Hertford Grammar and Perquimans County Middle schools.

Superintendent Kenneth Wells told board members that the school system must replace 41 of the 83 heat exchangers. The units are rusting, cracking and rotting, Wells said, which means the heat is being released from the units before reaching classrooms.

"This is something we don't have a choice," Wells said of the project.

Fortunately for the cash-strapped school system, Wells said it appears that at least 35 of the exchangers are still under warranty. That means the school system will have to pay for the replacements initially, but should get a refund from the original manufacturer. Wells said the units are in the ninth year of use and came with a 10-year warranty.

Maintenance employees Douglas Sawyer and Eddie Fowler have installed the units that have been replaced so far. However, the pair can replace only two per day, and their work has been hampered by rain. Wells said a contractor has been asked to provide a cost estimate on helping the school system's staff to replace the units so that students and staff can stay warm and the system can work efficiently.

In other facilities information presented, Wells said that the drainage project at Central School has been completed and appeared to be taking care of water problems at the site during the last rain.

The mold at Central also appears to be controlled at this point, but Wells said weather could be a factor in that improvement.

## PCHS student earns Hometown Hero Award

Megan Stallings is not one to draw attention to herself in a crowd.

That, however, does not mean that she doesn't stand out. The Perquimans County High School senior influences those around her with her example of determination, teamwork, academic performance and school, church and community service.

For her accomplishments, Stallings was named the December Lowe's Hometown Hero by Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse in conjunction with the North Carolina High School Athletic Association.

Lowe's Hometown Heroes program acknowl-

edges the accomplishments of North Carolina high school students who excel in the combined areas of academics, community service and athletics. Stallings' achievement will be recognized during the first half of a Carolina Panthers' football game this month, and Perquimans County High School will receive a \$1,000 Lowe's gift card on Megan's behalf.

"When you think about a student who is active in athletics, excels in academics and is involved in the community as well, you automatically think of Megan," said Carolyn Rogers, who for four years coached Megan on

Perquimans' volleyball team and nominated her for the award. "Megan is an outstanding student, always willing to go the extra mile for anyone. She is the type of student you want to have helping you."

Second in her senior class, Megan has a 4.2 GPA and was captain of the volleyball team. She attended the North Carolina Governor's School's English program in summer 2002. As a junior, Megan was one of a dozen students selected from across the state to observe the inner workings of state government in the North Carolina Governor's Page Program.

As a sophomore, Megan

worked 40 hours as a page in the North Carolina House of Representatives. There she saw firsthand how laws are made.

"Megan has always been one who searches for excellence in everything she does," said Dwayne Stallings, principal of Perquimans County High School and also Megan's father. "If she has a project to complete or certain grades that she wants to obtain, she puts her mind and efforts toward the task without procrastination."

President of the Beta Club, Megan has helped organize local food drives. She plays percussion in the school band and is an



Megan Stallings

Continued on page 12

## WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY  
High: 64  
Low: 53  
PM T'STORMS

FRIDAY  
High: 68  
Low: 39  
RAIN

SATURDAY  
High: 52  
Low: 34  
MOSTLY SUNNY