

Pets need adopting

Page 3

Lady Pirates make it to round 2

Page 6

Too late to call off war?

Page 4

PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

RECEIVED
MAR 05 2003

35 cents

March 5, 2003

Vol. 71, No. 10 Hertford, North Carolina 27944

Ballance visits Hertford

Farm needs focus of his visit

ROBERT SHILES
The Daily Advance

Congressman Frank Ballance, D-N.C., met with area farmers in Hertford Monday morning and also made his first visit to the U.S. Coast Guard base in Elizabeth City.

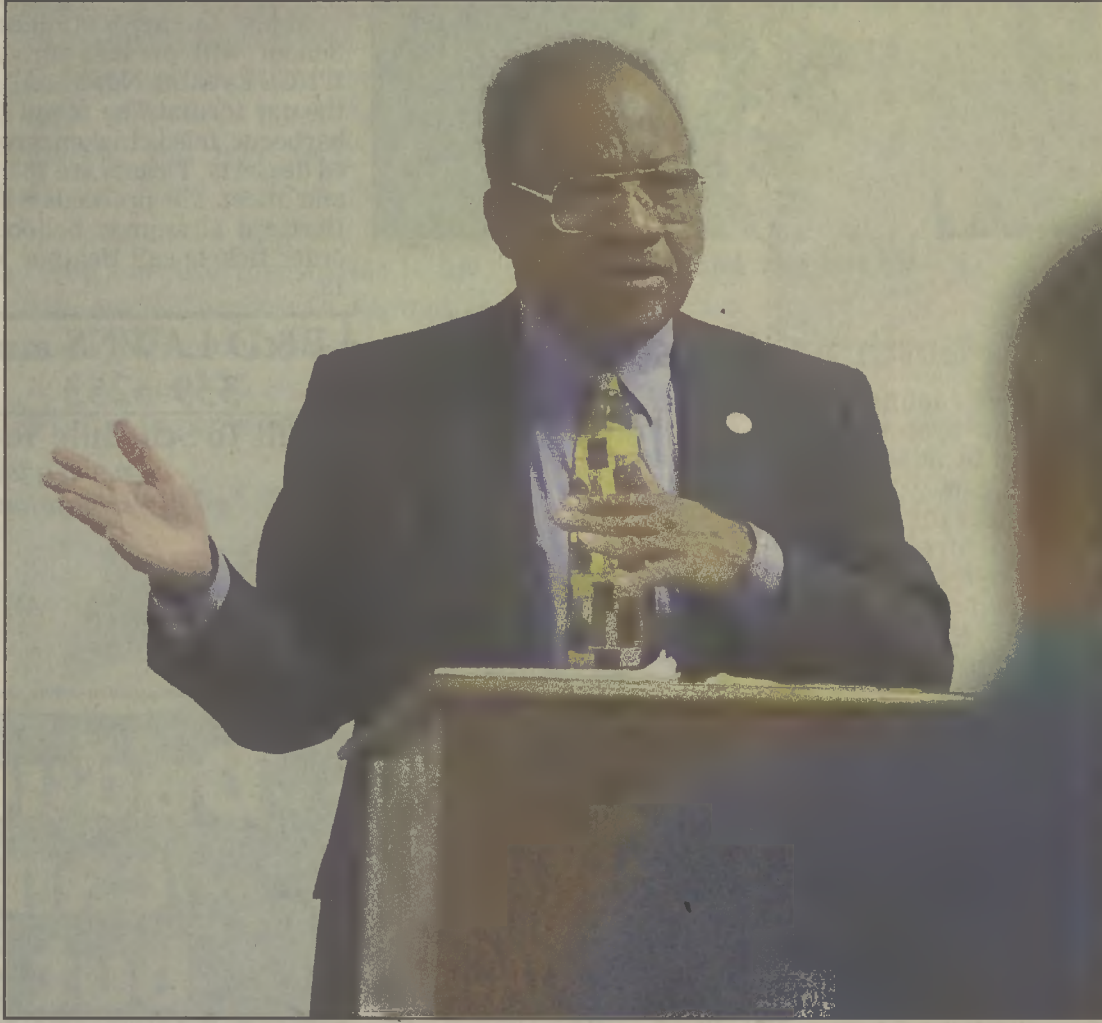
Ballance told about 25 farmers that it will take both Democrats and Republicans in the Congress to protect farming interests.

"It's important that we come together in a united voice for farmers," he said. "In the agricultural area we work pretty well together... We are going to have to hang together."

Ballance, a member of the House Agricultural Committee, acknowledged that he is not familiar with all of the needs of local farmers, and told the gathering at the Albemarle Commission building that he needs their input on farming issues.

"I have a tremendous respect for those of you who earn your living from the soil and love what you do," the congressman said. "... Communication between us is very important... I want to know what the farmers want so I can go to Washington and be an advocate for your position."

Farmers raised many concerns about provisions in the federal Farm Bill, as well as various funding and loan programs that assist farmers in their vocation. Several farmers noted that new laws are making it hard for them to compete with farming interests in



Daily Advance photo

Congressman Frank Ballance, D-N.C., met with area farmers at Hertford's Albemarle Commission Building Auditorium Monday morning.

other countries where labor and production costs are less and American markets are being flooded with imported crops.

Among other things, Ballance told farmers that the proposed tobacco buyout will be a hard sell in Congress unless support can be garnered from officials in more than just tobacco producing areas; that \$3.1 billion in drought aid—included in the 2003 omnibus spending bill and coming out of a conservation program in the farm bill—could undermine other farm bill programs; and despite unhappiness in

North Carolina by the peanut quota buyout, the federal government is trying to bring the cost of peanut production down.

One farmer, A.O. Roberts of Eure Seed Farms, also noted that more emphasis must be placed on farm preservation. Between 1982 and 1992, he said, North Carolina lost almost one million acres of farm and forest land. Of that figure, almost 295,000 acres was considered prime farmland.

Between 1992 and 1997 an additional 781,500 acres of farm and forest land was lost, Roberts added. That

was an annual loss of 156,000, he said.

"We're losing the battle," he said. "Younger men and women aren't going into farming because of the low profits, high land prices and high start-up costs which cause potential lenders to turn away."

In Elizabeth City, Ballance said he was very impressed with the operation at the U.S. Coast Guard Base.

Pasquotank Commissioner Hank Krebs and Winfall Mayor Fred Yates accompanied Ballance on his Coast Guard base tour.

PQ student dropout rate falls

SUSAN R. HARRIS

Perquimans County Schools' dropout rates are down for the third consecutive year, according to a report recently released by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

The local district's dropout rate was 5.49 percent for the 2001-02 school year, down from 10.06 percent during the 1998-99 school year. Last school year, 32 students, all in grades 9-12, dropped out, compared to 63 students in 1998-99.

"We are serious about providing assistance to students who are struggling in school," said Perquimans County Schools Superintendent Kenneth Wells. "Recent interventions implemented include the Advancement Center at Perquimans High School, the on-site Alternative Education Programs at Perquimans Middle School and Perquimans High School, the installation of Web Academy, and the Judicial Council for Improved Attendance. In addition, individual education plans for all students who are at-risk of not meeting standards are a part of our efforts to improve our dropout

rate. "These efforts are improving academic success and encouraging more students to stay in school, as evidenced by the 51 percent improvement in the dropout rate since 1998-99. Obviously, there is still work to be done in this area, but the information received in this year's report is encouraging."

The statewide dropout rate for grades 9-12 for the school year 2001-02 was 5.25 percent, representing 20,202 dropouts.

These numbers may include duplications. For example, if a student drops out more than once in multiple school years, each instance is counted as a separate dropout event. Dropout data have been collected each year since 1988-89, although specific reporting methods change from time to time.

A dropout is defined as a student who a) was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year (which is the reporting year); b) was not enrolled on Day 20 of the current school year; c) has not graduated from high school or completed a state or district approved educational program and does not qualify for any

Continued on page 8

Pirates are sectional champs, advance to regionals



Daily Advance photo by PATRICK PALLADINO

Titus Stepney soars over Williamston's Dominic Patterson (30) and Tyrell Short for a bucket attempt Friday night.

SUSAN R. HARRIS
and
MICHAEL WOOD
The Daily Advance

Perquimans collected the sectional basketball championship Friday night, having to defeat a tough Williamston team to earn the plaque.

The Pirates and the Tigers duked it out in the team's fourth meeting of the season, with Perquimans a 74-44 victor.

The victory sends Perquimans to the North Carolina High School Athletic Association Regionals in Greenville Wednesday night, where they will take on Northampton East at 8:30 at ECU's Minges Coliseum. Four Rivers Conference foe Plymouth will take on Wallace-Rose Hill the same evening.

The winners of the two games will play for the regional championship Saturday. That winner will play in the Dean Smith Center at UNC the next Saturday for the state championship.

"We are not done. Our

goal is to go all the way for the state championship," said Perquimans point guard Titus Stepney as he left the dressing rooms Friday night.

The score of the game was not indicative of the game's competitiveness. Perquimans' lead was only 35-29 midway through the third quarter.

But the Pirates, ranked third in the latest N.C. Coaches Association/High Class 1-A poll, smashed open the game with a 23-7 fourth-quarter run.

"They played us very aggressively," Pirates coach Donald Stepney said. "We hit the boards strong trying to limit them to one shot, and we knew we had to keep the pressure defense up for the entire game."

Shavoris Lewis made the most of his start Friday night. Usually the sixth man on the team, Lewis found himself in the starting lineup and made the most of it.

"Lewis could start for any team in the area," Stepney said. "We have some players with injuries, and he fits right in with our starting players. He has the

speed and ability on both offense and defense."

The junior responded by having his best game in the biggest game of the year, thus far. Lewis scored 10 points in the first quarter and finished with a game-high 18.

The Pirates are known for their shooting ability, but frequently it's the pressure defense that ignites this team's offense. That was again the case here.

The game was tied in the first quarter when the Pirates' press forced three straight turnovers, which were converted into baskets by Lewis.

Carrying a slim lead into the second quarter, Perquimans scored the first five points on its way to a 15-6 spurt.

J'Sean Wilkins and Terrell Woodard aided the outburst with 3-pointers.

Williamston opened the third with a 10-4 run, closing the Pirates' lead to six.

But Stepney would make a driving lay-up and then a soft jumper from the right baseline. Wilkins was then fouled on a 3-point attempt. He dropped in two free throws as the Pirates went up by double digits for

good. Stepney scored 11 while collecting six steals and dishing out six assists. Wilkins drained three 3-pointers on his way to an efficient 15 points, while William Perry added 11 points. Woodard and Jerrell Foreman led the team with eight rebounds each.

(See page 6 for more.)

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
High: 62
Low: 36
SCATTERED T'STORMS

FRIDAY
High: 62
Low: 51
PARTLY CLOUDY

SATURDAY
High: 61
Low: 44
SHOWERS