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Community notice

On Thursday, March 4 at approximately 2 p.m., emergency personnel in Perquimans County will be dispatched to the high school to accommodate a school-wide assembly. The call will be heard over scanners and emergency personnel radios.

Also, students were originally scheduled to be out of school March 11 and 12. However, March 11 will be used as an inclement weather make-up day. Students will not attend school on March 12.

For more information on schools, visit pcs.k12.nc.us or call 426-5741.

RECORD-SETTING SEASON



The Perquimans County Middle School Tiger basketball team recently recorded an undefeated season, going 17-0, including a 14-0 sweep in conference and winning three straight to claim the conference tournament title. Coach Luther Overton and company were honored by the school board at its February meeting.

New CDC helping county residents

CARRIE OLSON
The Daily Advance

A new community development organization began serving Perquimans County residents last year thanks to an intrepid local minister and a committed group of local volunteers.

Restoration Community Development and Empowerment Initiative, the brainchild of the Rev. Pearlie Smith, offers educational training and other programs to economically disadvantaged citizens in Perquimans.

Smith, who pastors the New Testament Church of Deliverance in Hertford, says she founded RCDEI out of a responsibility to help those in need.

"As a leader and minister I see it as my duty to leave the pulpit and take real help into the community," Smith said. "That is the vision."

But the real spark for starting a community development organization came shortly after the tragic death of Smith's son in 2002.

"God called me to give back to the community that raised me," said Smith, a graduate of Perquimans County High School. "I saw what has happened to the community since I grew up there and seeing the need of the young people and the elderly ignited the fire in me to give back."

It took a lot of planning, hard work and a move from Elizabeth City, but RCDEI finally took shape in 2003. Smith and her husband took a second mortgage on their home to finance lease payments on a storefront in a shopping center on Grubb Street in Hertford.

"(My husband) agreed to use our own money because he believed in my dream and the word of the Lord," Smith said.

Currently, RCDEI functions with an all-volunteer staff and has been helped by what Smith refers to as "in-kind gifts" from other community development organizations.

"We are working with Beaufort County CDC and Northeastern CDC to get our programs up and running," Smith said. "They have been very helpful."

Smith plans to apply for government and foundation grants, but hopes RCDEI will eventually be able to pay its own way.

"We are set up as a 501(c)3 (nonprofit corporation) and we are able to receive grants, but we will not be grant-driven," Smith said. "We promote self-sufficiency and we want to be self-supportive because of that."

RCDEI's broad goals are to improve the quality of life in Perquimans by providing educational, economic development, social outreach and housing programs to residents. But she believes the county's single-most important need is education and worker training.

"We could focus on economic development, but without a skilled and trained work force it won't work," Smith said. "Training is the first priority."

RCDEI tries to structure its educational programs around community needs.

For example, its programs include GED classes, job-readiness seminars and budgeting and credit-repair classes.

"We want to empower individuals to be self-sufficient and economically independent," Smith said. "That is the best thing we can do for people in this community."

Most of RCDEI's programs waive fees for individuals who meet certain income requirements.

"People with higher incomes will still be able to take the class, there will just be a small charge for them," Smith said.

In the future, Smith plans to increase the number and variety of RCDEI's programs to include youth tutoring, after-school programs, certified nursing assistant training and volunteer income tax assistance.

RCDEI also wants to focus on Perquimans' housing needs, believing no citizen should be without safe and affordable housing.

"We fight homelessness and promote homeownership through our home buyers workshops," she said.

RCDEI's homeownership class just graduated its first class of 10 first-time home buyers. Smith said future projects could include construction of multi-family units or special-needs housing for the handicapped and elderly citizens.

RCDEI also runs a food bank that offers incentives to students who successfully complete the nonprofit's classes.

"When the participants complete a program they can take a bag of food home," Smith said. "It's a good incentive."

For more information about RCDEI, call 426-3924 or visit its offices at 400 Grubb St., Hertford.

(Contact Carrie Olson at colson@coxnews.com)

Rotary, housing authority, town partner

Groups will cooperate on new town park

The Hertford Rotary Club is partnering with the Hertford Housing Authority and Town of Hertford to build a park on the shore of the Perquimans River in Hertford.

The Housing Authority and town cooperated to apply for a grant to construct a park off of White Street.

The park will include picnic, kayak and canoe launching and pier fishing facilities. There will be a boardwalk meandering through wetlands to the river, as well as a covered shelter. The site will be handicapped accessible.

The park will be named the Henry C. Stokes Jr. Rotary Centennial Park. Stokes is a charter member of the Hertford Housing Authority Board, agreeing to serve at its inception in 1961.

Stokes is also a Rotarian. His fellow club members thought it would be appropriate to honor Stokes for his years of service to the Housing Authority, as well as celebrate the 100th birthday of the Rotary organization with the park's name.

Rotary is selling engraved brick to serve as paving material for the park shelter. A purchaser may choose 8-inch by 8-inch bricks or a 4-inch by 8-inch brick. Larger bricks may be engraved with six lines of 17 characters each, while the smaller bricks will hold three lines of 17 characters each.

When complete, the park will likely become the first phase of a greenway-blueway plan to create non-motorized vehicle land and water trails throughout the county.

At a public hearing last week, Bill Bussey, state chairman of the N.C. East Coast Greenway, said his group is looking to connect neighboring towns from Maine to Florida with these trails. Those trails will cover 15 states with 2,600 miles of greenway trail sections built by municipalities.

The town and county are working together on the greenway-blueway plan. A planning grant has been received from the National Park Service to develop a plan for the county.

Greenways provide off-road walking, hiking and biking trails for use as

transportation or health and fitness. Studies show greenways promote safe communities, rural heritage, economic development and regional planning.

With the pristine waterways in Perquimans County, blueways should also be an important component of the plan. Canoe and kayak trails bring in tourists and allow local residents to enjoy the natural resources.

About 60 people attended the public forum last week. The snow and ice storms in other areas kept some of the guest speakers away. But those there were enthusiastic about the program.

For information about purchasing a paver for the park, contact Al Krepela, 426-9567; Dave Brower, 426-5982; or any member of the Hertford Rotary Club.

PRISM helps teachers meet highly qualified status

AYP, ABC, NCLB, closing gaps and highly qualified, — you don't have to be familiar with today's educational lingo to know that public schools are facing remarkable challenges under the implementation of the federal government's No Child Left Behind plan.

The new federal improvement standard, adequate yearly progress, will severely test the public's understanding of and support for public schools.

Perquimans County Schools was recently named as a partner in the PRISM (Partners for Rural Initiatives in Science and Mathematics) grant. The grant, written in collaboration with five high-need school districts and funded by NC Quest, is being used to assist middle school mathematics and science teachers in improving their knowledge and skills to increase student achievement.

Perquimans was allocated \$24,000 under the PRISM grant and is using the funds to help middle school math and science teachers meet the highly qualified



Anne Jolly, Senior Education Program Specialist for SERVE, provides coursework to math and science teachers at Perquimans Middle School.

standard required under NCLB. Teachers can utilize the funds to pay for coursework, praxis examinations, or national board certification.

Acknowledging that the teacher is the most powerful instrument for student success, there must be a continuum of development for teachers that facilitates ongoing reflection and renewal that propels and sustains teacher growth and teacher efficacy. The PRISM grant helps provide continual staff develop-

ment for teachers, addressing specific content changes, new research findings, new technologies, and new students in their classrooms.

The Perquimans County School System is working diligently to ensure success for all children. For the sixth consecutive year, the overall performance composite of each of the schools in Perquimans County has climbed, with the elementary schools increasing from 79.3 percent proficient in 2001-02 to

87.8 percent proficient in 2002-03, an improvement of 8.5. The middle school's performance composite went from 83.7 percent proficient to 85.4 percent proficient while Perquimans High School's performance composite increased from 69.6 percent proficient to 71.7 percent proficient.

Superintendent Ken Wells credits the success of the schools to the diligence of quality educators and outstanding students.

"Teachers are working like never before to put our children and their education first," said Wells. "Making education better today than it was yesterday is what it's all about."

As the school district continues to climb to the top of the testing scale, it will become more and more difficult to increase proficiency ratings. With the much-needed funding through grants like the PRISM, Perquimans will continue providing assistance to teachers to improve their knowledge and skills to improve student performance.

HOLIDAY WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 76
LOW: 56
PARTLY CLOUDY

FRIDAY
HIGH: 78
LOW: 57
PARTLY CLOUDY

SATURDAY
HIGH: 72
LOW: 48
SCATTERED T'STORMS