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# THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

35 cents

## Pair charged with embezzlement

### Mother, daughter charged with taking funds from PTSA

SUSAN R. HARRIS

A Perquimans County mother and daughter were arrested last week and charged with embezzling funds from the Perquimans

County Middle School Parent/Teacher/Student Association.

Sharon Marie Riddick, 43, and Sharon Marie Schwartz, 24, both of 1680 Ocean Highway South, Edenton, were charged with one count of embezzlement following an investigation by Perquimans County Schools and the Perquimans County Sheriff's Department. The charges are felonies.

Schwartz was charged with embezzling just under \$6,000, while Riddick is

accused of embezzling a little over \$1,200. Sheriff Eric Tilley said the pair was arrested at their home last Monday night, and both posted a \$5,000 bond immediately after it was set.

Tilley said he was notified in October by Schools Superintendent Ken Wells that there were some concerns about the middle school PTSA finances.

Tilley said Wells told him that Wells received a call from the Virginia firm Southern Promotions regarding non-payment for

a fund raiser the PTSA did through his company during the 2002-2003 school year. Riddick was president and Schwartz was treasurer of the organization during that time.

Tilley said Wells had tried to resolve the problem and recoup the funds, but was unable to do so. At that point, he contacted the sheriff's department, Tilley said.

Southern Promotions told Tilley and Wells that the company was owed about \$4,400.

Tilley applied for and got subpoenas for the PTSA bank account as well as both Riddick's and Schwartz's personal accounts.

When reviewing the bank records, Tilley said he discovered that 35 of 48 withdrawals made from the PTSA account between August 2002 and July 2003 were questionable. There was no record of a \$4,400 payment to Southern Promotions.

The PTSA account was depleted and closed by the

time Tilley got the records.

Tilley said warrants were issued on March 1. Several attempts were made to arrest Riddick and Schwartz between then and March 22 when the two were actually arrested. On more than one occasion, deputies knocked on the door and got no answer even though they heard noises coming from inside the house, Tilley said.

Tilley said no other officers or school staff are under suspicion in the case.

### DSS moves to prevent child abuse

SUSAN R. HARRIS

Blue will be the color when the Perquimans County Department of Social Services and the school system team up to observe Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.

Blue symbolizes the bruising worn by battered children. Blue ribbons are the symbol for the observance.

Social workers hope to raise awareness about child abuse with the campaign, and encourage children to report abuse or neglect.

Social worker Marilyn Gregory, upon receiving information about Child Abuse Prevention Month, told supervisor Susan Chaney that she's like to do something locally to bring child abuse to the forefront.

Chaney contacted Schools Superintendent Ken Wells, who agreed that it was a worthy project. The SAVE Club at PCMS agreed to help at the middle school and Central School, and the PCHS SADD Club will help at the high school and Hertford Grammar School. Hertford Grammar School's After-School Program will also be involved.

At the middle school, there will be an essay contest coordinated through the guidance department.

Each student in all four schools will receive a blue calendar to which is attached a blue ribbon. The calendar has a suggestion each day for strengthening families and helping to prevent child abuse.

Faculty and staff at all schools and school board members will receive a bookmark with child abuse facts and blue ribbon.

When DSS ordered the ribbon for the project from Wal-Mart, the employees found out what it would be used for, and donated enough money to purchase 20 of the 25 spools of ribbon needed.

"We were actually overwhelmed," Chaney said.

To find out more about child abuse, becoming a foster parent, please see page 3B.

### HELLO, DOLLY!



Perquimans High School will present "Hello, Dolly!" on Thursday and Friday, April 1 and 2, at 7:30 p.m. in the PCHS Auditorium. The cast took time to pose last week during rehearsals. Tickets are \$5 for adults and \$3 for students. Call 426-5778 for more information.

### Grandmother's grief led to blue ribbons

The grief and resulting action of one grandmother led to the nationwide Child Abuse Prevention Month blue ribbon campaign.

Bonnie Finney, a Norfolk, Va. grandmother, tied a blue ribbon to the antenna of her van in the spring of 1989, a signal to her community of her personal commitment to involve everyone in the battle against child abuse.

Finney sat by the hospital bed of her bruised and burned grandson, remembering her beautiful only child, a daughter who had entered into a stormy mar-

riage. Several times over the five-year marriage, the mother had brought her daughter back home. Although stormy, the marriage produced three healthy children.

The oldest, at 4, was once released from a hospital stay and went into foster care for three weeks. He begged social workers not to take him back to his mother. Finney, physically unable to care for the child, also asked that the boy not be returned home, but the courts ignored both her pleas and those of her grandson.

When the 16-month-old was hospitalized after a beating, it was found that the boy was missing. He has been killed, wrapped in a sheet, stuffed in a box and dumped in the Dismal Swamp three months earlier.

Finney's life was turned upside down. Her efforts to understand became a plea to stop child abuse. She tied the blue ribbon to her van as a symbol, a symbol of the color of her grandchildren's bruises. She said the color serves as a constant reminder to her to fight for protection of children.

### Prudential Retirement gives \$10,000 to Red Cross

#### Local chapter depleted after Hurricane Isabel expenses

401(K) Plan provider Prudential Retirement presented a \$10,000 check to the Greater Albemarle Area Chapter of the American Red Cross. The chapter, located in Elizabeth City, is in dire need of funding after providing aid to many families affected by Hurricane

Isabel, which hit the area last September.

The N.C. Department of State Treasurer oversees the NC 401(k) Plan, which is a supplemental retirement savings plan for public school teachers, law enforcement officers and state and local government employees in North Carolina.

"Prudential Retirement has demonstrated its commitment to members of the NC 401(k) Plan by providing solid investment options, excellent customer service, lower fees and outstanding educational resources to North Carolina's public employ-

ees," said State Treasurer Richard H. Moore. "Today's presentation of \$10,000 to an American Red Cross Chapter in North Carolina shows that Prudential is a dedicated corporate steward to all North Carolinians."

David Bates and Dave Holton, chair and vice chair respectively of the Albemarle Area Chapter's board, traveled to Raleigh for the presentation, which took place in the N.C. 401(k) Office on Fayetteville Street Mall.

The funds donated by Prudential were generated by a contest among human resources and benefits pro-

professionals in North Carolina's 1,200 government agencies last year. Prudential offered to donate \$5 to \$25 to the American Red Cross for every human resources and benefits representative who filled out a specific questionnaire. The responses generated nearly \$10,000.

The N.C. 401(k) Plan is the largest public plan of its kind in the country with over 181,000 members and more than \$2.4 billion in assets. In September 2003, the Plan transitioned to Prudential Retirement from its previous provider Branch Bank and Trust.

### Historic Hertford gets arts grant

#### Funds will help with Greenway/Blueway plan

Historic Hertford, Inc., the Town of Hertford's Main Street Program, was awarded a grant from the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) in collaboration with the National Endowment of the Arts and the National Park Service.

Liesel Fenner, Program Manager - Artistic Creation and Distribution for NEFA in Boston, Mass., announced that HHI was awarded a grant of \$25,000 for the Art in Community Landscapes Project. Only organizations involved with the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program are eligible to apply for the award.

For this project year two sites were chosen, Hertford and Boston. The grant will enable the county to contract with a professional artist, who will become part of the planning committee for the Perquimans County Greenway/Blueway Master Plan. The first meeting of the planning committee, facilitated by Bill Lane of the National Park Service, takes place March 30 at the courthouse. A committee of diverse community volunteers has

been identified and will work toward completion of the plan.

"Perquimans County Greenways/Blueways trail project competed nationally and was selected because of its strong local support, clarity of project vision, outstanding resource quality, and likelihood of success," said Charlie Tracy, NPS Coordinator of Art & Community Landscapes. "We also anticipate that Perquimans County schools will play an active role with this environmental art initiative."

Fifty-one artists applied to the project and 31 were interested in coming to Perquimans County. In February in Boston, a panel of artists, and representatives from NEFA, NEA and the NPS narrowed the field to three artists. From March - May these three semi-finalists will be visiting the county, meeting with local stakeholders and preparing a proposal that will be presented to a jury in May. The artist will be able to join the planning committee by June 1.

The \$25,000 grant must be matched dollar for dollar. Efforts are underway to write grants for the additional funds.

Historic Hertford, Inc. has a mission to develop partnerships that will facilitate the cultural and economic growth of the historic district. To become involved with the organization please call 426-1425 to discuss the opportunities to shape the town's future.

### HOLIDAY WEATHER

THURSDAY  
HIGH: 66  
LOW: 43  
PARTLY CLOUDY

FRIDAY  
HIGH: 54  
LOW: 43  
FEW SHOWERS

SATURDAY  
HIGH: 63  
LOW: 42  
FEW SHOWERS