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PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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Marijuana plants found

Officers look for owners

ERIN RICKERT

Deputies with the Perquimans County Sheriff's Department are looking into leads that could direct them to the person or persons responsible for attempting to grow 49 marijuana plants in a wooded area in New Hope recently.

Perquimans County Sheriff Eric Tilley said the immature plants were con-

fiscated from a section of woods near the Deep Creek subdivision the afternoon of June 4 after Sheriff's Deputy Phillip Lane responded to a call about mysterious plants on one resident's property.

When Lane arrived he found more than three-dozen marijuana plants no taller than about 2-feet high growing out of disposable red and yellow solo cups stuffed neatly in two plastic crates.

"They [the plants] were in a wooded area hollowed out to accommodate the plants," Lane said.

Lane said the owner, who

had purchased the property just over a year ago, traveled from their permanent residence in Virginia Beach that day to show a friend the property when the two stumbled on the plants.

Knowing the situation looked suspicious, Lane said the property owner contacted the Sheriff's Department.

If the resident had not seen the plants and they had left in the woods to mature, Lane said the plants could have brought in upward of \$5,000.

As a result, Lane said the person or persons who

owned the plants could face the felony charge of manufacturing if caught due to the large number of plants found.

"Typically charges associated with the handling of marijuana do not carry a whole lot of jail time," Lane said. "This time it could. This is the most marijuana we have found in at least the last two years."

Tilley said deputies are currently looking into reports they received about marijuana plants that may have been in the same area last year.

"They could be the same [as previous reports]," Tilley said.

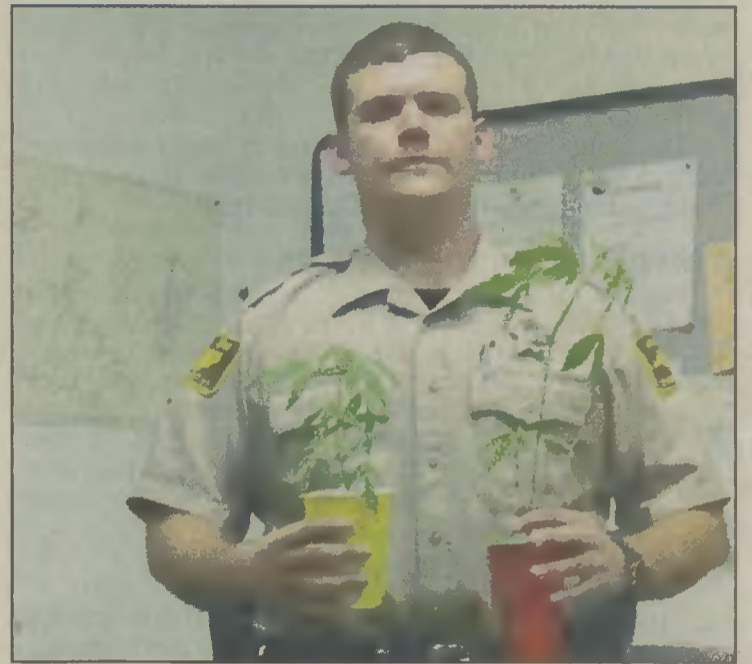


PHOTO BY ERIN RICKERT

Deputy Phillip Lane found and confiscated 49 marijuana plants in the New Hope community recently.

Chowan man nabbed for crimes

ERIN RICKERT

An Edenton man who allegedly broke into a Perquimans County home last year was arrested last week, officials said Monday.

Vernon A. Spivey, a.k.a. Vernon Patterson, 37, of 309 N Granville St., Edenton, was arrested Thursday and charged with first degree burglary, larceny of a firearm, robbery with a dangerous weapon and second degree kidnapping for the series of events that took place April 2, 2004.

According to Perquimans County Sheriff Eric Tilley, Spivey and a female accomplice allegedly broke into a mobile home at 109 Creek Court just after midnight that April morning.

"They forced themselves in the trailer and tied up the man inside," Tilley said.

Spivey and his accomplice then proceeded to lift \$18 from the resident's wallet along with a 38-caliber handgun Tilley said.

Thursday, members of the Edenton Police Department served Spivey with the year-old warrant

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ONE, TWO, THREE, JUMP!



PHOTO BY ERIN RICKERT

With temperatures in the high 80s and climbing this week, many Perquimans County residents jumped on any chance to cool off. Monday couple Jade Lassiter, 7, and Logan Basnight, 7, spent the day escaping the summer heat with more than a dozen others at Strick's Family Campground.

SPCA now has office in Visitors Center

ERIN RICKERT

Not too long ago resident Andrea Boone came up with the idea to start an SPCA program in Perquimans County after she discovered a stray dog in her neighborhood.

After some research and the realization of the high-need in the area for a program to educate and adopt out animals, the SPCA of Perquimans County was born with little money or volunteers.

Now nearly four years and more than a dozen board members later, the SPCA of Perquimans County has become a suc-



PHOTO BY ERIN RICKERT

Four-year-old Mariah James cuts the ribbon at the Chamber of Commerce-sponsored ribbon cutting for the SPCA last week.

Successful non-profit organization. Success, SPCA

President Keith Burnett said, is the direct result of

dedicated individuals in the community — individuals like 4 year-old Mariah James who saved all the coins from her piggy bank to give to the organization or the widow who asked all memorials be sent to the SPCA in honor of her husband.

"I never really thought it would last this long, but the perseverance of members on the board have kept it going," Burnett said. "It's really happening."

Thursday, a Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce sponsored ribbon cutting was held to recognize the SPCA's success as well as their growth —

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County tax rate to rise two cents

ERIN RICKERT

In the next few weeks residents will have a chance to weigh in on items proposed in the county's upcoming fiscal budget.

Perquimans County Manager Bobby Darden said residents will have a chance to comment on the proposed plan at 7 p.m. June 27 during a public hearing in the Commissioners Meeting Room located inside the Courthouse Annex off Church Street.

Darden said the budget scheduled for presentation includes a nearly 3.6 percent increase from the approved FY2004-2005 budget for a total of \$10,906,261 in the county's general fund.

Much like the 2004-2005 fiscal budget, Darden said a 2-cent ad-valorem tax increase is also proposed for the upcoming fiscal budget — raising the tax rate from 65-cents to 67-cents per \$100 of property value.

"This increase follows through with a plan developed last year to fund much needed HVAC and roofing repairs at the Perquimans County Middle School and Hertford Grammar School," Darden said. "The revenues from the proposed 2-cent tax increase along with the revenues from the 2-cent FY 2004-2005 increase are dedicated solely for the physical repairs of those two schools."

These revenues, Darden said, along with land transfer tax reserves and state capital funds the county should be able to fund more than \$3 million in improvements without assuming any additional debt.

"Even with the 2-cent proposed increase, Perquimans County's tax rate will still be 12-cents lower than the 16-county northeast North Carolina region average tax rate of 79-cents," Darden said.

The proposed budget also includes a 4 percent cost of living increase for all county employees effective when the budget takes effect July 1 — making it the first salary increase in 18 months.

With the new year Jan. 1 full-time county employees

will also be required to make a 1 percent salary contribution to the North Carolina 401K Retirement Plan.

"My hope is that this supplemental retirement will become a viable retention tool that can be increased in future budgets," Darden said.

In an effort to reduce the amount of manpower needed to read meters, Darden said this year's budget proposes a \$200 increase in tap water fees for all size meters that will be newly installed in the coming year.

This would cover the additional cost of radio-read meters and would bring the cost of a typical 3/4-inch tap up from \$800 to \$1,000.

Following next Monday night's public hearing, the commissioners have the option of adopting the budget as presented that night or to make changes in the three days prior to July 1 when state law requires the budget must be adopted.

Other budget highlights:

- The Perquimans-Chowan-Gates Landfill Commission will take over operation of the solid waste convenient center sites in the three counties early in the next budget year. The operation of the sites by a private company was found to be nearly 50 percent higher than if the landfill commission maintained the sites.

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WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
High: 88
Low: 67
ISOLATED T'STORMS

FRIDAY
High: 84
Low: 66
ISOLATED T'STORMS

SATURDAY
High: 82
Low: 69
SCATTERED T'STORMS