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PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

RECEIVED

DEC 14 2005

35 cents

December 14, 2005

Vol. 73, No. 50 Hertford, North Carolina 27944

Schools join with COA to recoup dropouts

MARGARET FISHER

A national program partnering seven county school systems with College of The Albemarle will allow some Perquimans dropouts to finish their high school education while earning a college degree.

The Gateway to College program, funded by a \$300,000 grant from Portland Community College in Oregon, will give high school dropouts and those on the brink of dropping out a second chance to earn their high school diploma.

"The beauty of this program is that this program is designed to recover students that have dropped out," said Perquimans County Schools Superintendent Kenneth Wells.

COA is one of four community colleges that has been selected to replicate the flagship program already begun in Portland. Because of the enthusiasm of COA's vice president of instruction, Althea Riddick, and the support of seven school superintendents, COA qualified as the first rural site accepted into the program to replicate the Portland program.

"There aren't enough students in Perquimans County to qualify for the program, but there are enough in the seven-county area," Wells said.

The program is planned to begin in the fall of 2006. Students will be referred to Gateway by their school district, community agencies or themselves. They will be admitted to the program after meeting specific requirements and, at the same time, will be re-enrolled in their home high school.

"It targets students who are no longer in high school for a variety of reasons," Wells said.

There is no stereotypical dropout and not all students who drop out have behavior problems or can't perform academically, Wells said.

"This program is not designed to be the answer for all dropouts," he said. "But it is the answer for a significant number of them. If we capture five or six of them from Perquimans, then it's well worth it. It's not going to cost any more money."

Funding will be provided by the grant for the first three years. In addition, state funding normally paid to schools per student will be re-captured by the home school and a portion of it will be used by COA as long as the student continues in the high school program.

Wells said that the program differs from a GED program because students will earn their high school diploma. Having a diploma could also mean the

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Four indicted for arson

MARGARET FISHER

Four individuals were indicted by a grand jury on Monday for breaking out windows of a New Hope home under construction, burning a shed and stealing.

Brandon Callahan, Robert Jake Matthews, Jerod Winslow and A.J. Overman, all from Perquimans County, were charged with burning a dwelling and breaking, entering and larceny.

On Oct. 22, a call was made to central communications that a shed located on Lots 2 and 3 on Rocky Street off of Muddy Creek

Road had been burned down. The property is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Calderwood of Connecticut.

The shed, which also doubled as an apartment, was burned down when Fire Chief Jimmy Spivey of the Durants Neck Fire Department and Fire Marshall John Long arrived.

"As a result of the investigation, there were four people indicted for various charges," said Perquimans County Sheriff Eric Tilley.

The Sheriff's Office will be serving the indictments to the four individuals.

Program offers HOPE to youth

MARGARET FISHER

In 1999, Ann and Willie Vaughn had a vision of hope for the less fortunate in Perquimans County, and that vision turned into reality.

The couple created Helping Ordinary People Excel Community Development Corporation, a nonprofit outreach program that began with providing food, clothing and monthly care packages to families.

HOPE CDC also offered transportation and weekend supplemental work for men and utility assistance and medication for the elderly in the community. Their efforts began to focus on the needs of migrant workers, as well.

After the program began to take shape, chief executive officer Willie Vaughn's brother, Gilbert Vaughn, chief operator officer, joined the couple in 2003. Gilbert Vaughn brought with him about 25 years of experience working in a similar program in Detroit, Mich.

While the program still supports those early needs, the focus has shifted to youth more recently. This year, HOPE gathered up a group of about 13 wayward boys, some dropouts or graduates and others not allowed to return to high school.

With a Northeastern Workforce Investment Act grant provided through Communities in Schools, HOPE was able to offer a five-week program to help the youth get started on putting together the pieces of their fragmented lives. Males were targeted at first because they ultimately become the caretakers of the home, Ann Vaughn said.

"If we help them, they will help others," she said. "And hopefully, it will be a better community."

The first group moved on to a program in Elizabeth City, the Workforce Proficiency Institute. This program teaches construction and computer skills. Youth ages 16 - 21 are paid small stipends for the construction work that they do assisting local contractors while learning life skills, said the agency's president, Harold Barnes. The year-old program is funded by Workforce Investment Act funds and private donations, he said.

Barnes said that following up with HOPE's program is a natural fit because HOPE provides a foundation for the youth, though it is not long enough for them to learn the necessary skills to succeed.

"I've known of the good work (HOPE has) done, generally, with the school system," he said. Continued on page 8

ROCKIN' REINDEER



Every second grader performed in "The Day The Reindeer Rocked," Central School's Christmas program, which was staged by Perquimans' first Regional Teacher of the Year Finalist, Michelle White. There was standing-room only for the performance.

Fire destroys mobile home

MARGARET FISHER

A fire in a Belvidere mobile home completely destroyed the residence of a couple and their son on Sunday.

At about 12:40 p.m., a call came in to central communications that a mobile home was on fire. New Land Fire Department in

Pasquotank County was the first to respond. Belvidere Fire Department also arrived and Winfall and Hertford fire departments were called in as backups to provide tankers, said Fire Marshall John Long.

The home, located on Craney Island Road, is owned by Robert and Eva Hurdle. Robert Hurdle, a native of Perquimans County, was

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PQ solicits top-quality teachers even with shortage

MARGARET FISHER

There was a time in the 1970s when qualified teachers had a hard time finding a job. That's not true any more with today's national teacher shortage. And yet, it's still the goal of schools to find the most qualified instructors to help shape their youth into productive workers and leaders of the future.

Candidates who are looking for teaching positions still have to be qualified and present their best attributes when applying for a job at Perquimans County Schools, said Brenda Dail, director of personnel. The same is true for other types of positions at the schools.

"I want everyone to be a serious applicant, but we only want to keep the best," Dail said.

To be a serious applicant means, among other things, to be aware of how the hiring process works in order to be considered for a position.

One of the most obvious steps in the process - turning in a job application - is sometimes avoided or the application is not updated. Potential applicants may tell a school board member or school employee of their interest in working for the school system, and then think that their word of mouth is a substitute for an application. However, no one is considered for hiring without an application,

Dail said.

In addition to filling out the application, candidates should include a resume and cover letter. A compact disk resume package is welcomed. All the information should be filled in, accurate and legible. The writing section should be written using excellent penmanship following standard grammar and sentence structure.

By In addition, pertinent information such as phone numbers, addresses and current employment should be kept current, and a new application should be submitted each year. Applications are cross-referenced so that a teacher who doesn't get hired may be hired as a teacher assis-

tant, for example.

PCS follows the Equal Employment Opportunity laws, not discriminating on the basis of race, color, religion, sex and national origin. PCS's first male elementary teacher works at Hertford Grammar, Dail said.

"When we get an application, we don't know whether you're male or female," she said. "...Gender equality is very important in our system."

The school system promotes its job openings through more than 10 job fairs a year, the Internet and in-house and outside advertising, which includes targeting minorities. A position cannot be advertised until a letter of

resignation is submitted.

Rather than hiring people on the spot at job fairs, each applicant is taken through a hiring process based on his or her credentials. Contrary to what many people have been taught, getting a particular position at PCS is not easier if you already work there, know someone who works there or live in the neighborhood, Dail said.

"We don't always hire within the system," she said. "We don't always hire local. We hire the best."

Applicants should meet the qualifications specified for the position they are seeking, or be able to meet them according to state requirements.

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WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
High: 58, Low: 41
RAIN

FRIDAY
High: 54, Low: 34
AM CLOUDS/PM SUN

SATURDAY
High: 51, Low: 39
MOSTLY CLOUDY