

Tax foreclosures up

Page 2

Prepare lawns for hurricanes

Page 5

Pirates fall in opener

Page 6

PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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DISMAL REFUGE

Exhibit shows colorful images of dismal refuge

Margaret Fisher

There are artists who are passionate about expression through creativity, and historians who are passionate about understanding the stories of the past. But Tunde Afolayan is passionate about both.

And he has combined these two passions in an exhibit, "Passion: Echoes of the Great Dismal Swamp," on display at the Newbold-White House until Sept. 7. About 40 people attended an opening reception last Thursday.

A native of Nigeria, Afolayan teaches art at Elizabeth City State University and is the founder of Artzone, a non-profit youth art education organization in Elizabeth City.

His current series focuses on the Dismal Swamp as part of the underground railroad. Afolayan uses vibrant colors to display emotion and African symbolism to convey meaning.

It was after the artist inspired students from Trigg Community School, an alternative school in Elizabeth City, to paint a mural depicting the swamp as a refuge for runaway slaves that Afolayan became interested in creating the 10-painting series.

His collection was purchased by Gail and Ken Henshaw, whose current plans are to keep it a traveling exhibit until they find a permanent location in the Albemarle area. While neither Afolayan nor Ken



PHOTO BY MARGARET FISHER

Tunde Afolayan, accompanied by his son, speaks to a group of about 40 people at the Newbold-White House about his inspiration to paint impressionistically about the slaves who escaped to the Great Dismal Swamp. The collection, owned by Gail and Ken Henshaw, is on display at the Quaker home through Sept. 7.

Henshaw would say how much the collection sold for, Henshaw did say that the cost of the mixed media painting "Refuge" alone was approximately \$10,000.

That painting stands out in the collection. A muted purple plaster mask is seen emerging among the trees of the swamp while blending into its colorful environment.

"The swamp is perceived to be a dreadful place where nobody wants to be," Afolayan said. "Yet, you find the slaves running in that direction. The slaves believe it is a refuge. Some actually settled down in the swamp."

Afolayan considers the arrival into the swamp a celebration and a positive

force, which is why he uses bright colors. Dull colors evoke a dull life, he said.

Lee Kapleau, vice president of the Perquimans County Restoration Association, believes that the Newbold-White House is an ideal location for the exhibit. The Dismal Swamp, the early Quakers and the underground railroad are linked together, she said.

The Quaker meeting was instrumental in helping slaves escape to places such as Haiti and Liberia, and its members offered their homes as stopping points, Ken Henshaw said. Henshaw, a resident of Richmond, Va., developer of Settler's Landing and chairman of the ECSU

Foundation, said that Afolayan's art is unique.

"(Afolayan) brings a different perspective that not everyone has. We need to enjoy and understand it," he said.

Sen. Robert Hollowell, one of the guests at the reception last week, said that he is impressed with his first visit to the Quaker home.

"I think it is so amazing how much history is right under our noses, and we don't smell it," he said.

Signed lithographs from the artist are available for purchase at the Newbold-White House gift shop, as well as books about the Quakers' role in the underground railroad.

ECU crew seeks sunken treasure

MARGARET FISHER

September 2007.

Whatever mysteries are lying on the bottom of the Perquimans River, Larry Babits, director of maritime studies at East Carolina University, is hoping to discover.

He and three graduate students have been combing the river with high-tech equipment for more than a week in hopes that sunken vessels and clues to the history of a vast shipping industry will emerge from the study.

"(The Perquimans) is one of the earliest areas of settlement that's been documented, and I've been fascinated with the Newbold-White House since I came to North Carolina in 1973," said Babits, who holds a doctorate in anthropology from Brown University.

The maritime studies program received a \$50,000 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration grant to survey and compare the Roanoke and Perquimans rivers for sunken vessels and artifacts.

The three students include Adam Friedman and Matthew De Felice and Amy Leuchtman, who will write a thesis providing analytical and interpretive information. A final report is due to NOAA by

"I think a lot of (the thesis) will focus on the history of this river, what its uses have been and the people who settled on it," Leuchtman said.

The students used sonar, a magnetometer, which detects metal, and sophisticated software to get underwater data that they will later analyze.

The crew began their surveying on Aug. 10 near the mouth of the Albemarle Sound. Last week, they covered the upper portion near Belvidere and the areas around the bridges. They will complete the survey in October.

On the computer, the students create survey lanes on which they travel back and forth using a 25-foot Privateer. The side scan sonar retrieves digitized information from as far away as 80 feet from either side of the boat.

While the students man the steering and tracking devices, Babits takes an inventory of what can be seen from the boat with a camera. He isn't just interested in past history. He's also recording current history for future generations.

Babits said they were building ships here from the 18th century to 1898.

Continued on page 8

Clark fears for personal safety

SUSAN HARRIS

arrests have been made.

Fear kept Clark and her husband, Michael Clark, up day and night for weeks. She said the people who terrorized her son ride by her house making threatening gestures and have been seen on the perimeter of her property, and she fears them.

"They were saying things and just hanging around, riding by at all hours of the night yelling," Clark said. "We thought they were going to burn our property. We always have someone watching our house. I'm on guard."

As for her husband's felony conviction, Clark

Continued on page 8

Crime prevention specialist visits

MARGARET FISHER

Concerns about increasing crime and drug activity in the county prompted officials to meet together to learn how to make the community safer and increase public involvement.

Rhonda Waters, director of the Hertford Housing Authority, invited Starr Barbaro, community development specialist in charge of crime prevention services with the Governor's Crime Prevention Commission in Raleigh, to hold a meeting with town and county officials, as well as a public forum last week.

Barbaro told about 30 officials from law enforcement, government and schools that they need to band together before conditions get worse. She cited examples of a number of cities with limited resources throughout the nation that stand as models in fighting crime. Law enforcement in small towns is usually underpaid, overworked and understaffed, she said.

"It creates a very dangerous situation when you

only have two police officers (on duty)," she said. Her recommendation is to get the community involved and create a plan with short and long term goals.

Involving the community means setting up crime prevention task groups of diverse members.

Schools can play a large part, and parents can help compensate for school understaffing, Barbaro said.

The Crime Prevention Commission offers two grants to support the fight against crime. One is for police equipment that supports crime prevention. The other grant, for overtime hours related to crime prevention, will be available next year.

The idea of getting the public involved was brought out at a public forum that attracted at least 30 people. Two areas that were addressed, included evidence of gangs and abandoned houses used for drug activity.

Mike Hester, a resident of Albemarle Plantation, said he thought the forum

was beneficial because it pointed out concerns that have doable solutions. He related the number of vacant houses to a cancer that spreads and eventually takes over the body.

"If you get rid of the dilapidated houses, then you get rid of the crime," Hester said.

Jane McMahon, owner of Hertfordshire Antiques, agreed that awareness is crucial. She said that the problem is not police response time, but getting people to report crime activity.

Tom Moriarty, owner of Out of the Past, said he was amazed that Barbaro could recognize indications of gang activity in about a 45-minute tour of the county.

"Somehow, we have to keep pressure on the town government that they do something," he said.

Small towns are not immune to problems of crime, said Hertford Town Councilor JoAnn Morris.

"There is a misconception that because we live in a small town, we don't have problems," Morris said. "We have all the problems

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 88, LOW: 72
PARTLY CLOUDY

FRIDAY
HIGH: 89, LOW: 73
MOSTLY SUNNY

SATURDAY
HIGH: 90, LOW: 75
MOSTLY SUNNY