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THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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NEAT idea

Officials look to enhance transportation programs

MARGARET FISHER

Project money is getting harder to find. So when Carter Dozier, director of Northeast Workforce Development at Albemarle Commission, found grant money for transportation, he jumped on the chance to enhance transportation collaboration within the 10-county region.

In August, the Commission formed a North Eastern Area Transit of North Carolina team to represent the Northeast Region. This initiative joins the 10 counties into a cohesive group to help meet transportation dilemmas such as employees needing to get to jobs or training across transportation system lines.

Grants totaling \$60,000 were awarded for the NEAT-NC initiative.

A \$15,000 grant from the Community Transportation Association of America through Albemarle Commission and a \$10,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture through Hyde County Transit were awarded to support the NEAT-NC team. These are short-term grants to be used to hire a consultant, create maps and meet other immediate needs.

A \$35,000 non-cash grant was awarded through the Edenton-Chowan Development Corporation to provide long-term technical assistance.

The NEAT-NC team was chosen along with 19

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Total loss



PHOTO BY MARGARET FISHER

A fire engulfed a home on Snug Harbor Road, leaving it unlivable and possibly killing two cats and injuring at least one other.

Fire leaves Bethel couple homeless

MARGARET FISHER

A fire in Snug Harbor completely gutted a home on Monday, leaving a couple with just the clothes on their backs and a vehicle.

Sometime before 5 p.m., Barbara Thorne was mowing the lawn in the back of her house at 1228 Snug Harbor Road. Her husband, Chester Thorne, was sitting on their swing, enjoying the pleasant afternoon weather.

When Barbara Thorne opened the back door to go inside, she was confronted by thick smoke. Alarmed, she gathered up three of her five cats and hurried outdoors. Two remained in the house and their condition was unknown.

Bethel Fire Department arrived in less than five minutes and Hertford arrived as backup.

"It was fully involved

when we got there," said Bethel Fire Chief Jeff Proctor.

What was left after firefighters fought the blaze was the charred frame of the home.

"I don't see anything that can be salvaged - not a thing," said Perquimans County Emergency Management Coordinator Jarvis Winslow.

The fire was so hot that it melted the siding on a house being remodeled next door.

The couple said that they didn't know what started the fire.

Proctor said that the cause of the fire couldn't be determined. Because of the extent of the fire and high ceilings, it may not be possible to know what caused it, he said.

A neighbor, Brenda Mitchell, who lives on the street behind the Thorne's

house, said that she heard a noise but didn't know what it was.

"I kept hearing this popping noise and I thought that Harvey Point was working late," she said. Then she thought it must be kids playing with firecrackers. She found out what it was when her husband drove quickly up the driveway and told her that the house behind them was on fire.

The popping noises could have come from a variety of sources, Proctor said.

Chester Thorne said that he heard the windows bursting out. He wept as he wondered what he and his wife will do. They recently had to give up their Hertford business, Lady and Mr. Goodstuff. Now, they are left with a plot of land and no insurance. Barbara Thorne said that

they were remodeling and hadn't taken out insurance on the home, yet.

Winslow made arrangements for the American Red Cross to meet with the couple to arrange a temporary stay at a hotel. As the couple sat in their truck in the parking lot across the street and watched firefighters hose down the house, Mitchell offered her home for them to stay.

Snug Harbor Property Owners Association and Stanley Nixon, pastor of Snug Harbor Community Church, provided assistance so the couple can purchase some basic necessities. They also are setting up a fund to help them either rebuild or find a permanent home.

Anyone interested in contributing financially to the Thorne fund can call Don Williams at 426-1043 or Nixon at 426-5971.

Child abuse cases rise

MARGARET FISHER

Since September, child abuse cases have risen dramatically throughout the county, according to the local Department of Social Services reports.

The issue is being brought into the limelight as part of Child Abuse Prevention Month.

During fiscal year 2003-2004, 87 cases of abuse, neglect and dependency were reported and found to be substantive. In 2004-2005, there were 114 cases. In 2005-2006, there were 82 cases.

From July to March 2006-2007, there have been 73 actual cases out of 143 reported to DSS. September and February each had 28 reported incidences. As of last week, there have been 15 reported in April, so far.

Not all reported incidences turn out to be actual cases. But all are taken seriously and investigated, said director Susan Chaney.

"Each report we get we have to carefully screen to see if it meets state mandates for assessment," Chaney said. Too often, reports are made in retaliation and cannot be substantiated.

DSS reports break the figures down into types of cases, ages of the children, gender and race. Cases are fairly evenly distributed between male and female children. The zero to 6-year-olds consistently rank higher in numbers than 7 to 12-year-olds or 13 and above, which usually has the least numbers.

Since July 2003, whites have been consistently

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Safety prime concern in Perquimans County Schools

MARGARET FISHER

Courtney Brothers, 16, knows almost firsthand how a school shooting can tear up a family. Her cousin was shot in the head at Virginia Tech last week and is currently in intensive care. She found out when she returned home from a trip to Raleigh.

"I was broken-hearted. Why would someone want to shoot innocent people like that?" she wondered aloud.

With 32 people dead at Virginia Tech and bomb and shooting threats happening in numerous schools in Virginia and North Carolina, school safety issues are at the forefront of many people's minds.



PHOTO BY MARGARET FISHER

High school officials believe that they are prepared as well as possible for such events as the shooting incident that occurred at Virginia Tech last week.

Bryana Bass, 14, said her mother phoned her brother at N.C. State University

simply to make sure he knew what had happened at Virginia Tech in case

Could more be done?

Local resident Brad Kime spent 22 years as a U.S. Navy intelligence analyst and nearly five years as a civilian employee for the Navy currently doing the same type of job. He sits on the courthouse security committee offering high-tech security advice. Perquimans County schools are already practicing a number of safety

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basically an act of terrorism when it comes to how Emergency Management would handle it, said Jarvis Winslow, county coordinator.

Perquimans County Schools makes safety a prime concern, said Brenda Lassiter, public information officer. "One of the things we always do is plan for the worst, hope for the best and pray that nothing like this happens in our school system," she said.

Pasquotank County parents waited outside three schools after a shooting threat and worried about how their children were faring, and Virginia Tech students had no idea what was going on at their campus. That just wouldn't happen here, Lassiter said. The

schools have a calling system - Connect-Ed -

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WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 79, LOW: 65
MOSTLY CLOUDY

FRIDAY
HIGH: 83, LOW: 64
SCATTERED T'STORMS

SATURDAY
HIGH: 78, LOW: 58
ISOLATED T'STORMS