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THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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"News from Next Door"

35 cents

New PCHS gym roof catches fire Friday

CATHY WILSON
Perquimans Weekly

A small fire in the roof connecting the school with its new gym closed a classroom and caused Perquimans County High School to open on a modified schedule Friday morning.

Damage was contained to the connector area and is estimated by school officials to be less than \$5,000. No one was injured in the fire which was reported at 6:52 a.m.

Jonathan Nixon, director of maintenance for the school system, said no students were inside the school when the fire was reported. The handful of staff present were evacuated immediately, he added.

Hertford Volunteer Fire Chief Bob Reed said smoke was coming from the roof on the newly constructed gym complex when the first units arrived on the scene. Firefighters were able to extinguish the blaze within

20 minutes with both foam and water.

Damage to the roof was kept to a four-foot square area, he said. The classroom below, which housed health and physical education classes, received minor damage.

"Whoever saw the smoke this morning and called it in saved the day," said Reed. "The alarm system did not go off."

Nixon said not enough smoke entered the building to cause the alarm to sound before firefighters arrived. The system, he added, was recently inspected and certified by the county fire marshal and is in working condition.

Schools Superintendent Dr. Dwayne Stallings said the school system sent out a ConnectEd phone call to parents notifying them that school would operate on a slightly delayed schedule. The school resumed its normal schedule and the gym reopened around 11 a.m.

The classroom, how-

ever, will remain closed until Tuesday, said Nixon. The room continues to be ventilated to get rid of any residual smoke, and some ceiling tiles were taken down. School will be closed Monday due to a previously scheduled teacher work day.

"We are very fortunate that the timing of this fire was such that no life safety issues arose for either our students or our staff," Nixon emphasized.

While the cause of the fire has not been determined, Nixon said a roofing contractor added a layer of roofing membrane in that area just the day before.

"A.R. Chesson and their subcontractor are assuming responsibility for all damages," Nixon added. Chesson was the contractor overseeing construction of the gym project that opened March 18.

According to Nixon, Chesson is making necessary repairs on the area damaged by the fire today.

School officials were quick to thank the local firefighters who responded quickly to the scene.

"Because of the emergency services' quick response, damage was minimal," said Stallings.

Hertford, Winfall and Bethel firefighters responded while InterCounty, Durants Neck and Belvidere were placed on standby.

Friday morning's fire seemed like *deja vu* for both school and fire officials. On Oct. 21, a fire on the roof covering the media center, computer labs, distance learning classroom, and administrative offices was also linked to roof work being performed by the same subcontractor. That fire was reported at 6:50 a.m. on a Sunday morning by a Hertford police officer on routine patrol.

The October fire damaged the roof on the older building while the interior of the building sustained both smoke and water damage.



Perquimans Weekly photo by CATHY WILSON
JONATHAN NIXON, DIRECTOR OF maintenance, checks the machine that eliminates any water on the classroom wall following last week's fire on the roof connecting the new gym to the old school.

Mobley campaigns in Hertford Sunday

CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

It was cold and nasty outside, but inside was warm and inviting as Fifth District Representative Annie Mobley greeted her constituents with hugs during a reception held Sunday afternoon at the Perquimans County Recreation Center.

The Democrat who represents Perquimans, Bertie, Gates and Hertford counties in the state legislature, faces her first election this year since being appointed to serve in January 2007. She faces opposition from Robert Richardson in the May 6 primary.

Mobley told those who braved the inclement weather she has a passion for Northeastern North Carolina and fights with that passion regarding local issues and funding.

"We should be better at getting a larger piece of that pie," she said. "It's time to stop getting just the crumbs."

She said her colleagues in the general assembly for the past year have learned who she is and what she stands for.

"When they say 'no' to me, that just raises my curiosity," she said. "It makes me think, now where do I go next to get the results I



Perquimans Weekly photo by CATHY WILSON
THE INCLEMENT WEATHER MAY have contributed to a small crowd attending a public reception in honor of Rep. Annie Mobley Sunday. She faces her first election May 6 since being appointed to the position in January 2007.

need."

She described herself as having a reputation in Raleigh of being a committed person, of not taking no for an answer, and not backing off from a fight easily.

Her remarks were supported by state Sen. Ed Jones, 4th Senatorial District, who added his own description of Mobley: "go

getter."

He reminded those present that much is accomplished in Raleigh through seniority, and encouraged the district to send Mobley back to serve one more time.

"We know what kind of person we've got right now," Jones said. "Elections are like a box of choco-

lates. You never know what you're gonna get."

In addition to the state legislators speaking, local candidates running in the May 6 primary who were in attendance also were allowed to speak briefly.

Arlene Yates and Gail Hill, candidates for the county school board, and Mack Nixon and Tommy

Riddick, candidates for county commissioners, campaigned as well.

Fred Yates, chairman of the county's Democratic party, said all Democratic candidates would be invited to speak at the county democratic convention scheduled for April 19 at 10 a.m. in the county courthouse.

Hertford birthday kick-off is May 4

CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

The big birthday party is less than a month away.

The town of Hertford will turn 250 years old on May 4 and a celebration to kick off a year-long observance is planned.

Mary Mc. White, the events planner hired by the town to coordinate anniversary events, said the day's happenings are set to begin after church that Sunday.

Food vendors will line Church Street which will be closed from Grubb to Market streets. Both Captain Bob's and the Belvidere Ruritans will offer lunch on the street starting at noon.

CONTINUED on page 2



Fabric shop fills void in local retail market

CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

Sewing here just got easier. A new full-service fabric store offers one stop shopping for all your sewing needs.

Located in the Ken-Nix Plaza at 1249 U.S. 17 South in Elizabeth City, the Velvet Stitch is stocked with fabrics, notions, yarns, books, patterns, needlecrafts, and even handmade gifts such as handbags and wreaths.

"There was a grand need for a fabric store here that offers a better variety of sewing goods," explained Tiffany McPherson, owner, as to why she opened the store. "I either had to go to Virginia to buy my sewing



Perquimans Weekly photo by CATHY WILSON
THE PERQUIMANS COUNTY CHAMBER of Commerce held a ribbon cutting Saturday morning at The Velvet Stitch, a full-service fabric shop located in the Ken-Nix Plaza at 1249 U.S. Highway 17 South in Elizabeth City.

items, or order it off the Internet. In the fabric world, it's all about touching the fabric and thread count. It

was hard to order off the internet because you never knew what you were getting because you couldn't

touch it beforehand."

She also offers classes for all ages and her store includes lots of space with large tables set up where classes can be held. She plans to hold kids' camp this summer teaching the young ones how to sew and give them something else to do besides watching television or playing video games.

"Kids would like sewing if given a chance to learn," McPherson said.

She also offers a wide spectrum of alteration services at the store by appointment only on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

She can special order any fabric or pattern needed. Last Saturday, members

of the Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting at the store, which was packed with excited sewers and needle crafters before 10 a.m.

"The support from the community has been extremely overwhelming," grinned McPherson. "People are so excited they have a fabric store where they can buy something other than black and white thread and not have to travel 30-40 miles to do it."

The Velvet Stitch is open Monday-Thursday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., and on Saturday, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

For more information, call 384-0200.

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 77 LOW: 60
PARTLY CLOUDY

FRIDAY
HIGH: 79 LOW: 63
MOSTLY CLOUDY

SATURDAY
HIGH: 76 LOW: 58
SCATTERED T'STORMS

