

# THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

"News from Next Door"

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New Hope UMC celebrates 200 years Page 5

Perquimans youth have 'Fishy Fun' Page 7

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## Congrats, class of 2009!



THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY PHOTOS BY CATHY WILSON

Kaci Chappell gives the thumbs-up sign after receiving her diploma from Perquimans County High School on Thursday.

## 90 Pirate grads walk the stage

By Cathy Wilson  
Staff Writer

Watching her daughter Deborah march onto the stage to receive her diploma, Susie Swindell experienced the feeling most parents get when their child graduates from high school. "She's not supposed to be graduating yet," said Swindell. "She's still a little girl. The kids are ready to graduate, but the parents aren't!"

The younger Swindell, and 89 other seniors at Perquimans County High School, graduated Thursday night on Memorial Field before an overflow crowd. Parents and grandparents wiped tears from their eyes, or whooped with joy as the graduates received their diplomas from Superintendent Dr. Dwayne Stallings and Board of Education Chairman Wallace Nelson.

Nelson encouraged the graduates to follow the nine "Cs" of leadership as defined by author Lee Iacocca: curiosity, creativity, communication, character,

courage, conviction, charisma, confidence, and common sense.

Valedictorian Jaclyn Winslow challenged her fellow graduates to do hard things in life.

"Anyone can do what is easy, but those who choose to accomplish difficult tasks make a difference in the world," she said. "See every day as a gift and look for the best in every situation. Look back on the memories you've made and the lessons you've learned. A foundation has been laid for you and now it's time for you to build on it. The decisions you make in this critical time will determine the person you become. Don't be afraid to dream big."

Salutatorian Chase Baccus cautioned the graduates moving on to a new stage in their lives.

"Throughout these last four years the teachers in this school have tried to teach us hard work and discipline, and for our entire lives our parents have taught us morals

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Balloons, flowers, cards and well-wishes filled graduation night for the 90 graduates at Perquimans County High School, Thursday. Below: Deborah Swindell and mom Suzy share a moment following graduation.



## Policeman's termination questioned

By Cathy Wilson  
Staff Writer

Petitions bearing 124 signatures were presented to Hertford council last week calling the firing of the town's only African-American police officer "wrongful." Petitioners seek the reinstatement of Clifton Johnson who was terminated from the department May 15.

Chief Joe Amos said he could not comment on why Johnson was terminated because it is a personnel matter. Town Manager John Christensen echoed Amos's comments.

"The town cannot discuss Johnson's employment unless he releases the town to do so," Christensen said. "He was given a release form at the council meeting recently, but did not give us a signed form before leaving that meeting."

Johnson says he doesn't know why he was fired.

"I was not given a reason for being terminated," said Johnson. "I had no clue it was coming. I still don't have any answers."

Johnson said he was told by Amos to file a grievance through the town's grievance process. When Johnson met with Christensen to begin that process, Johnson said he was told he didn't have any rights because he

was still a probationary employee when terminated.

Johnson was hired June 6, 2008 by a former police chief.

New employees are probationary for six months, but police are considered probationary for 12 months by the state, explained Amos.

"What I don't understand is why I was told to train another new probationary officer while I, myself, was still on probation," said Johnson. "She (new officer) was released after just six months of probation."

Johnson pointed out that when he was first hired, he had no supervision.

"My immediate supervisor was on leave for six or seven months," he said. "I had no supervision."

Several members of the community spoke in favor of Johnson, including Tony Riddick, a member of T.R.U.T.H., The Righteous United Through Harmony. Last fall, the group organized a late-night street patrol on weekends to help ease tensions on King Street when the police department was short-staffed and without a chief.

Riddick voiced concerns over violent crimes in the area, including several unsolved murders, especially on King Street. Police

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## No tax hike for Winfall, roads budget reduced

By Cathy Wilson  
Staff Writer

Winfall residents won't face a tax hike in the 2009-10 fiscal budget approved by council last week. Water and sewer fees will remain the same as well.

The approved general fund budget totaling \$459,975 retains last year's ad valorem tax rate of 41 cents. The general fund budget, which is \$44,000 less than last year's, does not provide for salary increases for town employ-

ees.

Projected sales tax revenues for the town are down by \$5,500. The new budget also does not include grant money for recycling, police or the fire department. Winfall's police budget is unchanged from 2008-09.

Because of an increase in insurance costs, the town's administrative budget increased by \$5,800. The roads and grounds department was reduced by \$44,300.

The 2009-10 budget goes into effect July 1.

### WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY  
HIGH: 86 LOW: 71  
SCATTERED STORMS

FRIDAY  
HIGH: 89 LOW: 74  
ISOLATED STORMS

SATURDAY  
HIGH: 89 LOW: 73  
SCATTERED STORMS



## Perquimans sees spike in food stamps usage

From staff reports

Nearly 1,000 more area residents have been added to county food stamp rolls in the past five months — largely due to more people losing their jobs, social service workers in the five-county area say.

In November, department of social services offices in Pasquotank, Perquimans, Currituck, Camden and Chowan counties reported that 11,545 residents were receiving food stamp benefits.

In April, that number jumped to 12,480 recipients — an increase of 935, or 7.5 percent.

Perquimans saw the area's

### Inside

Read policeman's story about going through foreclosure. See page 10.

largest spike in food stamp recipients over the five-month period. In November, the county had 1,624 residents receiving \$196,786 in benefits, and in April that number rose to 2,065 residents receiving \$269,919 in benefits. The average monthly payout per recipient grew from \$121 to almost \$131.

Perquimans Department of

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## Church helps those hit by hard times

Clothing, food, prayer available

By CATHY WILSON  
Staff Writer

A cool mist was falling, but that didn't dampen their spirit.

Volunteers cooked and dished out mounds of hot scrambled eggs and sausage underneath a tent set up in the middle of Dobbs Street one recent Saturday morning. Piles of clothes topped other tables lining the sidewalk.

"It's all free," said Pastor Suzette Hayes of Press Toward the Mark Ministries as she encouraged folks walking by to join them for breakfast, pick up needed clothing, or just to pray.



THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY PHOTO BY CATHY WILSON

Tiffany Foreman volunteered to help feed others recently during a free food and clothing giveaway sponsored by Press Toward the Mark Ministries.

The small Hertford church, with about 50-70 members, tried to help the community that is hurting from the economic slowdown, she said.

"We just really wanted to reach out to the community by offering free food, free clothes, and prayer," said Hayes. "We get calls every week from

people in the community who are trying to decide whether or not to feed their families, clothe them, or pay the electric bill. They just can't make it during these hard times."

Several church members have lost their jobs, or have

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