

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY



"News from Next Door"

DECEMBER 30, 2009 - JANUARY 5, 2010



PCMS hosts concert. Page 4

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Woman offers reward for return of stolen life

Thieves take cash, clothes, furniture

By Cathy Wilson
Staff Writer

Myrtle Sparks is barely able to talk about the break-in without shedding a few tears. At the age of 70, she feels as though her life has been stolen from her.

Her home at 319 Grubb St.

was broken into around Mother's Day and thieves made off with cash, clothes, and household items too numerous to list. Sparks estimates the value of items stolen as well over \$100,000.

The Hertford Police Department investigated the break-in and one man was charged with possession of stolen goods after a couple of items reportedly taken from the Sparks property were located at a local thrift shop.

None of the items reported stolen were marked with her identification, and Sparks has no pictures or other proof of ownership of the items, police said. At the time the break-in was discovered, she had difficulty telling police what had been stolen. Police listed only \$13,100 in property taken at the time, but noted Sparks was going to provide them with an updated list later.

She had no insurance, she says.

Sparks is concerned that no one is charged with stealing her items, but she mainly wants her possessions back, and will offer a reward to hopefully speed up the process.

"I mean they took everything: my clothes, my dishes, my books, my furniture, my collections, my money," she said. "Everything I worked for my entire life is gone."

The former accountant says she was in the process of

moving from Virginia Beach to her Hertford property when the break-in occurred. In addition to her house being packed full of items, several storage units located on the property were emptied as well.

Sparks said they last visited the house April 25. When they returned May 12, everything was gone except a few items including leather sofas that were placed on end as if waiting for help to arrive to haul

out the door.

"Someone had dragged my stuff through my yard and through a hole in the fence in the back yard," she explained.

The police report notes that several of her items were staged at the back of her property near the fence while other items were staged on the back porch, waiting for the thief or thieves to return.

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Sworn in



PERQUIMANS WEEKLY PHOTO BY CATHY WILSON

Ed Lane (left) takes the oath of office from Clerk of Court Todd Tilley. Lane was one of two new Hertford Council members sworn in recently after being elected to the office in November. Councilwoman Lillian Holman was also sworn in. See page 2.

Schools net dropout prevention grants

Perquimans receives \$175K in grant money to help keep students in school

By Kristin Pitts
The Daily Advance

Local school districts that fall below the state's average graduation rate have been awarded grants that area superintendents hope will deter at-risk students from dropping out.

The Perquimans and Edenton-Chowan school districts both received \$175,000 grants from the North Carolina Committee on Dropout Prevention.

The Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools received \$65,000.

On average, North Carolina schools graduate 71.7 percent of their students, according to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Web site. Edenton-Chowan, Elizabeth City-Pasquotank and Perquimans all fell below that rate for the 2008-09 academic year.

According to DPI, Edenton-Chowan's graduation rate was 70.6 percent, Elizabeth City-Pasquotank's was 69.3 percent and Perquimans' was 64.4 percent.

Although this January will mark the first year that Elizabeth City-Pasquotank will benefit from the grant, this will be Edenton-Chowan's third dropout prevention grant, and Perquimans' second.

Perquimans Superintendent Dwayne Stallings says although the reasons for individual dropouts vary, keeping a student in school can be as simple as setting up a relationship.

With its first grant, Stallings said the district was able to

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Walker keeps county home safe from intruders

By Toby Tate
The Daily Advance

Most people who see Walker, the 273-pound English mastiff patrolling inside the gates of Mason and Frances Spruill's S and S Ranch in Perquimans County, think twice about opening the gate without calling the house first.

Those who don't, learn quickly to do so.

Walker's owner, Frances Spruill, said the dog is not only loyal and protective, he's tenacious as well.

"He's very protective of me and my husband," she said. "Even law enforcement do not get out of their car if they come our way. (Mastiffs) are holding dogs — they will hold you by the throat for up to a week."

When Walker Texas Ranger — Walker's full name — was 8 weeks old, he weighed 40 pounds, Spruill said.

"That was the only time I could ever

pick him up," she said.

All of the couple's animals, she said, including their goat, have interesting names, mostly borrowed from famous people.

"Our Collie's name is Bill O'Reilly Spruill and the Jack Russell is named Freddy Krueger," she said. "We also have a goat named Christmas who thinks she's a dog because she sleeps with the dogs and she's a lap goat, too."

Walker was recently at Pasquotank Animal Hospital where the staff was amazed by the animal's sheer size.

"Dr. (L.D.) Cooper said it's the biggest dog he's seen in 31 years," said Stephanie Horst, a veterinarian technician who helped treat Walker at Cooper's office.

Spruill said Walker was at the animal hospital because of a seizure. Cooper advised her that Walker has epilepsy.

"Walker was diagnosed with epilepsy and has to take medicine for the rest of his life," Spruill said. "We haven't had any health problems other than this.

They say most dogs get epilepsy, but they don't usually have seizures."

English mastiffs are one of the largest dog breeds in the world, with males averaging 150 to 200 pounds. Only the Irish wolfhound and Great Dane are taller. And since Walker is nearly four feet tall on all fours, that's saying a lot.

Mastiffs are also natural guard dogs, according to Dog Breed Info.com.

Spruill said Walker is not an attack dog. She said he's well trained and surprisingly gentle.

"I have a 9-month-old grandson and 2-year-old granddaughter and he's as gentle to them as a stuffed animal," she said.

Spruill said the biggest expense for such a large dog is food.

"We make a run two times a month to Sam's Club," she said. "He eats nine packs of Moist and Meaty mixed with four packs of Nutra a day. Twice a

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

Walker, a 273-pound English mastiff, resides at the home of Mason and Frances Spruill in Perquimans County.

WEEKEND WEATHER

FRIDAY
HIGH: 53 LOW: 28
SHOWERS

SATURDAY
HIGH: 44 LOW: 26
PARTLY CLOUDY

SATURDAY
HIGH: 44 LOW: 31
MOSTLY SUNNY



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jeri Oltman, librarian at the Perquimans County Library, who will retire from her position Dec. 31, receives a plaque from Dan Ellis, chairman of the Perquimans Library Board.

Librarian looks back on 15 years of growth

Jeri Oltman to retire on New Year's Eve

from staff reports

Perquimans County Librarian Jeri Oltman retires Dec. 31 after more than 15 years of service.

Members of the Perquimans Board of Commissioners honored her recently with a certificate of appreciation for her years of service to the county.

Kay Davis, director of the Pettigrew Regional Library, said Judi Bugnizet, of Black Mountain, will begin her duties as new librarian at the Perqui-

mans Library in March.

Oltman says that while she may be retiring, she is not leaving the area.

"I plan to stay here and I will be in the library from time to time, especially when the new county librarian is first here," she said. "I'm looking forward to passing on the torch!"

Oltman says she is ready to face the next chapter in her life now that she's nearly completed her bookwork at the library.

"I've accomplished what I set out to accomplish when I came here-and more-and it is time to move on to new challenges," she said.

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