

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY



Stover to serve as student ambassador. Page 3

"News from Next Door"

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Hertford man faces federal wire fraud charge

Charge stems from loan transactions

By CATHY WILSON
Staff writer

A Hertford man who practices law in Virginia will face one count of felony wire fraud in U.S. Dis-

trict Court in Norfolk. Authorities believe Stephen M. Gunther, a Virginia Beach attorney, schemed to defraud four mortgage companies by failing to identify third parties involved in the real estate closings of four home sales in 2006. According to the U.S.

District Court Clerk's office, Gunther, who remains free, is scheduled to enter a guilty plea to the charge March 25.

Court records allege that Gunther, 39, was the settlement agent during the closings of two homes located in Norfolk, one in Virginia Beach and one

in Chesapeake involving financing by four separate mortgage institutions: Fremont Investment & Loan, American Home Mortgage, Diversified Mortgage, and Baltimore American Mortgage Corporation.

Authorities believe the nearly \$1 million mort-

gage scheme used "straw," or faked, purchasers.

They also allege that Gunther advanced closing costs, got reimbursed by a third party, charged a fee in addition to his reimbursement and his attorney's fees, and then did not include that information on the settlement

statement.

The mortgage companies eventually sold the loans to other companies that resulted in more than \$210,000 in losses when four of the buyers defaulted on their loans.

Gunther is being represented by Norfolk attorney James O. Broccoletti.

Complaint is filed against schools

Mom believes mold causing problems

By CATHY WILSON
Staff writer

A Hertford mother has removed her 13-year-old son from the local school system and filed a discrimination complaint with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) against the Perquimans County Schools.

Theresa Gay said she removed her son, Andrew, from the school system Jan. 25 after allegedly suffering from mold toxicity while attending Perquimans Middle School and the Accelerated Learning Center. She filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education OCR after her son, an eighth grader, suffered serious asthma attacks, as well as a variety of other symptoms, while attending school between August 28, 2009 and Jan. 15, 2010.

Jim Bradshaw with the U.S. Department of Education press office in Washington confirmed Tuesday afternoon that OCR received a complaint Jan. 25 against the Perquimans County Schools, alleging that the district discriminated against a student with a disability by not providing "a clean learning environment." The complaint is still under evaluation to determine if the allegations are appropriate for an OCR investigation and resolution, he added.

Brenda Lassiter, the school system's public information officer, released a statement Wednesday saying the

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Race to the finish line



CATHY WILSON/PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

Area Cub Scouts gathered at Southgate Mall in Elizabeth City on Saturday for the annual Pinewood Derby races. Hertford Cub Scout (top photo, center) Dylan Cox, reacts in agony as his car doesn't cross the finish line first during one of the races. Other scouts whose cars ran in the trial race with Cox include Alex Johnson of Edenton (left) and Andrew Koontz (right) of South Mills. At left, Cox grimaces following the race, as his car finished behind the other competitors.

County ranks low on health study

By CATHY WILSON
Staff writer

According to a recent report ranking the overall health of the state's 100 counties, Perquimans County residents may be on the sick list.

In fact, the study shows that Perquimans ranked 75th out of 100 counties in health outcomes and 72nd in health factors.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute compiled a first-time study that collected reports from counties from every state in the nation.

According to the county health rankings, local residents can now get a better picture of the overall health of the community and compare it with neighboring counties, to see where improvement is needed.

In the study, the category health outcomes was made up of mortality (length of life) figures and morbidity (quality of life) numbers. Health factors included health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment.

Out of the five-county Albemarle region ranging from Chowan to Currituck counties, Perquimans

See HEALTH, 4

Last-minute filers spark upcoming elections

By CATHY WILSON
Staff writer

A last minute flurry of filers on Friday beefed-up local political races this spring and fall.

Five people have filed for three seats on the board of education to be decided in May while four people want to fill three seats on the board of commissioners in November. In addition,

the incumbent sheriff faces opposition this fall. A local resident is also seeking to upset Rep. Annie Mobley in the race for the NC House 5th District.

Eula Mae Forbes, director of the Perquimans Board of Elections, said incumbents Wallace Nelson and Walter Leigh each filed to seek re-election to the Perquimans County Board of Education. Join-

Decision 2010

ing them on the May 4 election ballot will be Gail Vaughn Hill, Diane Layden and Ralph Hollowell.

Hill seeks to reclaim her seat on the board that she lost in 2008 after serving four years.

"I've always had an interest in kids and I'm still working with kids," she said. "Serving on the board of education is one place I can really help benefit kids."

Layden, from Belvidere, feels her experiences in life will help her make good decisions if elected to the board.

"I wish to be on the board of education because the

total education and experiences of today's youth is important for shaping tomorrow's leaders," she said.

Efforts to reach Hollowell were unsuccessful.

Nelson has served on the board for a total of 12 years and currently serves as chairman.

Leigh has served on the

See ELECTION, 4

High school site of Best Practices Conference

From staff reports

Although doors to the schools were closed for students on Presidents Day, Feb. 15, in Perquimans County, the halls were filled with more than 300 educators, administrators, superintendents and other retired school personnel from around the northeast region at the fifth annual

Best Practices Conference.

Perquimans High School served as the host site where more than 40 sessions highlighting best practices in the education arena were offered.

"Encouraging an atmosphere that embraces the sharing of best practices can avoid reinventing the wheel, and more quickly enact new processes and

programs that can help improve the education of our students. Teachers thrive on best practices and look for opportunities to share what successful things are happening in the classrooms," said Superintendent Dr. Dwayne K. Stallings. "No longer do teachers operate in isolation. Collaboration is the key to success."

According to Stallings, if others are doing well, people tend to be interested in what they are doing and how they are doing it, so that they, too, can be successful. Sharing best practices is a key to the success of any education system or organization.

"I have found it is easier and more effective to learn from the experiences, mis-

takes and successes of others," said one beginning teacher attending the conference. "Because best practices are not rules or law but are a standard operating method that produces the best performance and results, they (the practices) are bendable and adaptable to meet the needs of individual students and school systems."

WEEKEND WEATHER

FRIDAY
HIGH: 53 LOW: 36
SUNNY

SATURDAY
HIGH: 55 LOW: 39
SUNNY

SUNDAY
HIGH: 58 LOW: 39
PARTLY CLOUDY



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