

Cooper named Teacher of the Year at PCMS

By CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

This year's Teacher of the Year (TOY) at Perquimans County Middle School became a teacher and a mother on the very same day.

Sandra Cooper, a language arts teacher for the past six years, gave birth to a premature baby 38 years ago. Complications from being a preemie left the child deaf. She began teaching her son in an effort to help him be happy as a child and grow into an independent and productive young man.

As she watched him grow and become educated in a school that specializes in teaching the deaf, she realized that helping

the mentally or physically challenged would be her chosen path.

"Life (my personal experiences of raising a deaf child) put teaching in my path, love put teaching in my heart," wrote Cooper in her TOY application. "I feel my greatest contributions and accomplishments in education have been affording each student the opportunity to experience success and inspiring them to always try to give and do their best in all they do. For the ability to succeed is locked deep inside each of them, how-



Cooper

ever, it is not always easy to bring it to the surface to say the least. My job, my success comes in knowing that they too realize the greatness that lies inside of them; and the fact is that they can achieve if they only believe and add a little effort."

The 24-year education veteran taught English and History for 16 years at Perquimans County High School before transferring to PCMS. Prior to that, she was a teacher's assistant for two years at Sheep Harvey Elementary School in Elizabeth City where she resides.

She is a graduate of Elizabeth City State University.

"I believe education is the nucleus from which

one builds a solid foundation to become a productive contributor to society," Cooper noted. "It is my belief that each institution of learning starting at home, then school and the community should serve as a magnetic field which attracts and cultivates the minds of all children to strive for excellence."

"I believe that the mind of each and every child is like a field waiting to be cultivated to plant seeds of knowledge to keep our world free, honest and productive for generations to come," she added. "When I hear a child say 'I'll do my best', and they do it--'I'll try' and they do it--'I have it now' and they prove it, my heart overflows with joy."

Cooper believes that educating children takes a collaborative effort shared by parents, teachers and the community. She also believes that the major issue facing public education today is the lack of financial assistance to support vocational programs that would help prepare students to be career ready after high school.

"Not every student will or will want to go to a four-year university or a two-year college," Cooper stressed. "We need a vocational program in high school offering such courses as auto mechanics, brick masonry, cosmetology, industrial arts, woodworks, certified nursing assistant which would allow students to not only

be qualified but certified at the end of their senior year."

"These programs bridge high school and real world life together for that child that is not college material at graduation from high school," she continued. "With this type of program in place, it would decrease the drop out rate, eliminate behavior issues, and increase business and job rates. Education should not be a one size fits all; all children wear shoes, however, they all wear different sizes. That is why I believe vocational program offerings in high school would promote self esteem, high school graduation rates, and improve society's overall economic growth."

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BONUS

Continued from Page 1

but they must clear them through their supervisor.

Unless approved by their supervisors, days off from school during Easter break will also be counted as bonus annual leave days for non-instructional school personnel as

well.

The special leave days must be taken by June 30, 2013 or forfeited, according to the North Carolina Office of State Personnel.

The special vacation days are provided to eligible full-time employees employed with the state as of July 1, 2012.

Employees who work less than 12 months a year will receive a pro-rata

amount of leave. Permanent part-time state employees will also receive a pro-rata amount of the five special days.

School personnel are not the only local state employees who will receive the additional week of vacation time this year.

Perquimans Extension Director Lewis Smith notified county commissioners last month that the state has provided the special days to their eligible employees as well.

Commissioners agreed to the provision since the county shares extension's salary with the state.

Commissioners were not required to approve

the time off for school employees because the county provides a local supplement for teacher salaries which are paid through the state salary schedule, noted Frank Heath, county manager.

In other school matters recently, members of the Perquimans Board of Education approved replacing aging cameras in yellow school buses and adding security cameras to the school system's activity buses this school year.

Fortress Systems International will do the contract work on 38 buses for \$53,846. The project is expected to take one-two weeks to complete.

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GRANT

Continued from Page 1

software needed for student experiments, and the rest on supplies and overhead.

"School districts were innovative and creative in their applications," said Deborah Patterson, the Monsanto Fund president. "We are really looking forward to seeing the propos-

als come to fruition and learning how the students benefit from them."

Besides Perquimans, other North Carolina districts to get money were in Craven, Beaufort and Rowan counties.

Perquimans estimates that between 125 and 140 students in each of the nine grades will take part in science fairs, starting with third.

America's Farmers Grow Rural Education started with a successful pilot in Illinois and Minnesota in 2011.

Farmers were given the opportunity to nominate public school districts in 165 eligible counties in those two states.

The Monsanto Fund awarded more than \$266,000 to local schools in 16 communities. Now, the program has expanded to 1,245 eligible counties in 39 states.

FIRE

Continued from Page 1

Street where they found the clothes burning.

Police rode to the hospital in the ambulance with the victim to ensure the safety of both the man and the EMS workers.

It is the policy of The Perquimans Weekly not to identify victims involved in suicide attempts.

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