

# Pasquotank native takes 4-H role in Currituck

From staff reports

staff Dec. 2.

A native of Pasquotank County has been named to serve as the 4-H program assistant in Currituck County and as the Currituck County Rural Center director.

Thomas Harrell joined the staff Dec. 2. Harrell has shown horses through 4-H, the American Quarter Horse Association and other organizations for most of his life.

"Tom has hit the ground running and brings lots of exciting ideas for how to

expand the use of the center and improve the equine education arm of 4-H and Cooperative Extension" says Cameron Lowe, cooperative extension director. "We are very excited about the dynamic he will add to our staff team and the op-

portunities he will provide the citizens of Currituck through 4-H and at the Rural Center."

Tom will be responsible for overseeing the Currituck County Rural Center staff and operations. Responsibilities will also include pro-

viding leadership to a county-wide horse educational and recreational program through distribution of educational materials, special events, classes and clinics. Efforts will specifically target 4-H horse program members and volunteers.



HARRELL

## TEACHER

Continued from 1

opinion were Judges J. Douglas McCullough and Linda McGee.

Joyner, who now teaches in the Bertie County Schools, could not be reached for comment this week.

But her attorney, Mary-Ann Leon of Greenville, said she and her client are thrilled with the Appeals Court's decision. Leon said she and Joyner are particularly excited that the appeals court ruled "what a board can and cannot do in a situation like this."

John Leidy, an attorney for the Perquimans Board of Education, said he was disappointed with the court's ruling.

"And I'm sure that the board will be as well," he said.

Leidy said he was particularly disappointed that the appellate court did not address many of the arguments in the school board's appeal, including whether a trial court has the authority to award tenure to a teacher.

"There's no legal authority for that," he said.

Perquimans schools spokeswoman Brenda Lassiter said the school district had no plans to comment on the ruling.

According to court records, Joyner was hired by the Perquimans County Schools in August 2008 to teach first grade at Perquimans Central School. After teaching first grade for a couple of years, Joyner spent the

next couple of years teaching exceptional children. By the end of the 2011-12 school year, she was eligible for career status, what's commonly referred to as tenure.

On May 14, 2012, the Perquimans Board of Education met in a closed session to decide whether to grant career status to 13 other probationary teachers, including Joyner. All 13 of the teachers, including Joyner, had received a positive recommendation for career status from schools Superintendent Dwayne Stallings, the court record shows.

But during the closed session, the board's discussion appeared to zero in on Joyner.

Board member Ralph Hollowell said he had heard from a number of sources, including teachers, teacher assistants, parents and grandparents "questionable information" about Joyner. Hollowell did not elaborate but said he was not sure exceptional students at Perqui-

mans Central "were getting what they needed."

Hollowell described an incident in which he had served as a substitute teacher at Perquimans Central for a few days and observed Joyner meet with three students, individually, for less than 10 minutes each. Hollowell told fellow board members he "questioned the quality of services the students were receiving in such a short length of time."

The board, after speaking with Stallings, Perquimans Central Principal Melissa Fields and former principal Linda White, voted to grant career status to the 12 other teachers, but not to Joyner.

Because teachers who do not receive tenure at the end of their fourth probationary year of employment are let go, Joyner was dismissed from her job and notified by letter a day later.

After learning of the board's decision, Joyner asked the school board for a hearing, which was held May

29, 2012.

During the hearing, which Hollowell did not attend, Joyner noted her positive employee evaluations as well as the favorable recommendations she received from Stallings and Fields.

She questioned Hollowell's opposition to granting her career status, pointing out that it followed an incident involving herself and Hollowell's wife, who also was a teacher at the school. According to Joyner, she had a confrontation with Hollowell's wife after accusing her of "misadministration" of a writing test to students.

Three days after the hearing, Joyner received a letter from school officials expressing concern about her performance and upholding the decision to deny her tenure and dismiss her from employment.

In his opinion for the appeals court, Dillon said a review of the Perquimans school board's own records failed to show a "rational basis" for the board's decision. He said the school district's records failed to demonstrate whether Hollowell had the background or training to comment fairly on Joyner's performance as an educator of exceptional children.

Dillon also noted that because Hollowell was absent from Joyner's hearing on May 29, 2012, his "vague and unsubstantiated allegations" were left unexplained and prevented Joyner from questioning him directly about his concerns.

Dillon also pointed out that another board member had said Joyner shouldn't be granted tenure if "it was thought that the system could do better." However, the board had not applied this "could do better" standard to the other 12 candidates seeking career status, he wrote.

The judge described the Perquimans school board's decision to deny Joyner tenure as "arbitrary and capricious."

It was not clear if Perquimans school officials planned to appeal the case further.

According to Lassiter, the school district has spent \$7,734 in legal fees on the Joyner lawsuit. She said the N.C. School Board Trust has represented the school district in the case since July 17, 2012. She said that the Perquimans district pays annual dues of approximately \$2,000 to the trust.

sometimes laws enacted by the General Assembly can frustrate the effort.

Nelson doesn't believe lawmakers hold malice toward educators or education, but they might not truly understand the impact their decisions have on small school districts.

"I sometimes think people in Raleigh without any experience in a small, rural county really don't have an appreciation for some of the struggles we face. We have a certain population that can't afford to be taxed a whole lot to generate local revenues for education. That's the reality."

"But some of the legislative decisions that have been made over the last year, or two or three or four have given us another set of challenges."

"We've got a small pie. We've got 1,800 kids in our school system. All children deserve to get a quality educational experience, but when you start dividing that pie up some things are going to get lost."

As for Nelson, he has a year remaining on this term on the Perquimans board. After that, he's going to step down. Nelson served eight years on the board, then got off. He won a seat on the Perquimans County Commission and served four years until his mother got sick. He returned to the school board and is on his second four-year term. His job is pharmacy manager of Vidant Chowan Hospital in Edenton.

## NELSON

Continued from 1

list included the state's principal and teacher of the year.

The Albemarle region has produced just four Dingman award winners including Nelson since the award started in 1981. The first was Clifford Winslow from Perquimans in 1982 followed by Mary Ellen Maxwell from Currituck in 1994 and Wayne White from Camden in 2004. Only the winners since 2003 have been given the ex-officio seat on the state school board.

The award is named in honor of first full-time executive secretary of the state school boards association.

Nelson said the insight from Raleigh looking out has been helpful.

"I think I've always felt deep down the state board was all about doing what's best for children and not trying to be difficult. I always felt that way and serving on the board has basically validated that. They're a group of people that really do want to put policies and standards in place to help education."

Nelson said while the state school board has the best interest of kids at heart

## PERQUIMANS COUNTY PUBLIC NOTICE

Except for the Sheriff's Department, Dispatch Office and Emergency Medical Services, all County Offices in the Perquimans County Courthouse, Courthouse Annex, Social Services, Agricultural Extension Service, Perquimans County Library and the Perquimans County Recreation Department will be closed on Wednesday, January 1, 2014, for New Year's Day. The Water Department will be closed but emergencies may be reported to the Dispatch Office by calling 426-5751.

Frank Heath, County Manager

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**Town of Winfall**

**Offices**

Will close at Noon

**Monday, December 23, 2013**

**Offices are Closed:**

**Tuesday, December 24, 2013**

**Wednesday, December 25, 2013**

**Thursday, December 26, 2013**

**Friday, December 27, 2013**


and

**Wednesday, January 1, 2014**

In case of an Emergency

call 426-5741

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## CONVENIENCE SITE HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

**CLOSING** at noon-  
Tuesday December 24th 2013  
Christmas Eve



**CLOSING** at noon-  
Tuesday December 31st  
New Year's Eve

**CLOSED** - Wednesday December, 25th 2013  
Christmas Day

**CLOSED** - Wednesday January 1, 2014  
New Year's Day

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**OPEN:** Thursday January 2, 2014

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26  
BY 12:00PM.**

**THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY**  
Will be Closed  
**Wednesday, January 1, 2014**

*Have a Safe and Happy  
New Year!*

**THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY**

(USPS428-080)  
Vol. 81 No. 52  
Published each Wednesday.

A publication of Cooke Communications North Carolina, LLC  
Established 1934  
111 W. Market St., Hertford, NC 27944

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Peter Williams..... News Editor  
Bev Alexander..... Advertising Representative

Phone 252-426-5728 • Fax 252-426-4625  
Email: perquimansweekly@ncweeklies.com

Subscription Rates

In Perquimans County.....	\$24.20
N.C. out of County.....	\$29.50
Out of State.....	\$33.90

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to  
The Perquimans Weekly, Hertford, NC 27944

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