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PCHS GRADS MOVING FORWARD

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

In the future they want to be engineers, doctors, soldiers, mechanics, nurses and teachers.

Friday night they took that first big leap toward those goals by becoming the 89th class to graduate from Perquimans County High School.

The vast majority of them have their sights set on something beyond high school. Of the 111 students who earned a diploma, 39 plan on attending a four-year college. Another 59 plan to go to a community college and technical school and three want to enter the military.

That's just what Walter Leigh wanted to hear.

After 22 years on the Perquimans County School Board, Leigh is stepping down but not before he urged the 2014 class to "keep the fire burning" and keep pushing for something better.

The top two graduates echoed some of that, and also urged their classmates to have fun along the way.

Valedictorian Shelby Spruill urged her classmates to be happy, and illustrated it with a quote from John Lennon.

"When John was 5 years old his mother always told him that happiness was the key to life. So when he went to school and the teacher asked him what he wanted to be he wrote down 'happy.' The teacher told him that he did not understand the assignment. He told the teacher that she didn't understand life."

Salutatorian Robin Leigh spoke of life as a canvas that many people play a role in painting.

"I think we have all

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STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS

With a little help from his mother and a cane, Fred Wills III begins the walk to receive his diploma Friday evening at Perquimans County High School.

Grads welcome classmate back

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

The loudest cheers at Perquimans County High School's graduation Friday night didn't go to the top scholar or the best athlete.

They were clearly reserved for Fred Wills III.

Wills was seriously injured in a car accident in May and it was questionable if he'd be able to attend graduation at all. He's still recovering and Monday he was on his way back to Sentara Norfolk General for a follow-up exam.

But Friday night when he was wheeled in in a wheelchair the entire graduating class and the crowd sprang to their feet and roared. Minutes later when Wills' name was read and he walked across the stage with a cane and a little assistance, the crowd reaction was even louder.

"I've never seen anything like it," said Fred Wills Jr., his father.

The prospect that he might not be able to attend graduation weighed heavy on his son, Wills said. But the reaction Friday night has lifted his spirits.

"He really does seem more

happy now. He really wanted to make it (graduation)," his father said.

His father was parking the car when his son was wheeled into the gym so he didn't see the reaction, but he heard it.

"It was like being at a football game and your team scored a touchdown or a baseball game when your team hits a homerun."

School officials were equally impressed.

"I thought the reception of the kids shows how close this class

See CLASSMATE, 4

Valedictorian, salutatorian find home here

STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS

Kristina Garrett (left), Robin Todd and Shelby Spruill smile for the camera while waiting for the start of Friday's graduation at Perquimans County High School. The three are the top students in this year's graduating class.



BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

Life-long Perquimans County students take the path that goes from Perquimans Central to Hertford Grammar, Perquimans Middle and then Perquimans High.

Shelby Spruill and Robin Todd didn't do that but managed to rise to the top of the 2014 graduating class.

Spruill was born in Chowan Hospital but has lived her entire life in Washington County. Both her parents are educators and because her father teaches in Perquimans Shelby was eligible to attend school here.

Spruill went to pre-school at Albemarle Academy. Kindergarten was at Perquimans Central,

See HOME HERE, 4

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

For now Perquimans County officials are withholding their applause for a plan to upgrade U.S. 17 to interstate highway status.

Advocates of the proposal say it would better link Raleigh and Norfolk, Va. and bring development to the northeast. The plan has the support of Gov. Pat McCrory and appears to be gaining traction.

Last week U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield, D-N.C., announced he was co-sponsoring House Resolution 4829. The measure would

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Winslow named extension director

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

Jewel Winslow, a 20-year veteran with the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service, has been named director of Perquimans County office.

The appointment was official June 2. She replaces Lewis Smith who retired as of the first of the year. Smith had been in the Hertford office since 1991 and in extension since 1980.

By some standards, the six months it took to fill the Perquimans position was fast.

Three of the five counties in the Albemarle area are operating with interim directors. The Chowan office hasn't had a director in more than a year and the state



WINSLOW

has scaled back staffing for the extension service and some positions have been left unfilled.

Perquimans County Commissioners stressed the importance of extension in the county when Smith announced he was stepping down.

On Friday County Manager Frank Heath applauded Winslow's appointment.

"I think it's a wise move on the part of extension," Heath said. "She's got a lot of experience in the community and has proven to be a good leader."

Heath said county officials worked closely with Travis Burke, the regional head of the extension service on getting a replacement for Smith. Burke, a former extension agent in Elizabeth City, now handles a 22-county region that includes the entire northeast region.

Winslow called the fact that Perquimans County only went six months without a

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S-bridge should be repaired soon

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

The 86-year-old S-Bridge in Hertford should reopen to traffic later this week after being closed because a piece of it came off.

The N.C. Department of Transportation closed the span Friday.

Initially DOT reported that a piece of steel slipped and wedged the bridge shut. On Monday DOT spokeswoman Jennifer Garifo said the piece was an expansion joint that ran the width of the bridge.

DOT was able to open the bridge Friday for boat traffic that needed to get through, but it's been closed to vehicle traffic.

"We are currently expecting everything to be fixed by



STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS

A N.C. Department of Transportation crew works on the Winfall side of Hertford's S-bridge on Monday morning.

the end of the week however, we will have a better idea of the schedule as the week goes on, Garifo said.

The timing was almost perfect for the Perquimans County Schools. Buses regularly use the S-Bridge get-

ting two and from the two schools on the Hertford side and the two schools on the Winfall side. But Friday was the last day of school for students and many parents

See S-BRIDGE, 4

