

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

"News from Next Door"

SEPTEMBER 17, 2014 - SEPTEMBER 23, 2014

SEP 17 50 cents



Available Wednesday, Albemarle Magazine, Fall 2014 edition

Former teacher found guilty of sex crimes

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

A jury found a former Perquimans County High School football coach and teacher guilty last week of 10 counts of taking indecent liberties with a child.

If aggravating factors were found in all 10 cases, Harrell Thach could have faced 100 years in jail. But the charges were lumped

into five different indictments. The jury did not find aggravating factors applied in two of the cases and Judge Walter H. Godwin Jr. consolidated the cases.

That means Thach faces 31 years in prison. Assistant



THACH

District Attorney Kimberly Pellini estimates that Thach will likely only have to serve about 15 years of that.

"He could have gotten a whole lot more time, but the judge consolidated the cases," said Perquimans County Sheriff Eric Tilley who observed some of the trial. Because the offenses happened years ago Thach was sentenced under different guidelines than are

in place today. Thach is appealing the conviction. He was taken into custody and taken Thursday to the Albemarle District Jail and will be transferred as soon as possible to a state correctional facility.

The three-day trial centered around a relationship Thach had with a 14-year-old girl. About 90 percent of the allegations happened during the summer of 1993

when she was between her eighth and ninth grade years in school.

None of the allegations had anything to do with his role as a teacher at Perquimans County High School or as head football coach. Instead they centered around his work with the girl who was involved in showing horses. Thach had a horse farm on Cedar Stretch Road.

The trial included closed-door testimony from the victim, Katrina Stone, as well as a closed-door session where an audiotape was played of the phone conversation between Stone and Thach from 1996.

Once the trial was over, Stone gave brief speech.

"She said this has been something that for a long

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Grad rate sets record

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

Perquimans County Schools led the Albemarle area this year in graduation rates last year with a 92.1 percent four-year graduation rate according to data released by the state. That's the highest local rate on record.

The state's four-year graduation rate was 83.8 percent.

While four of five area districts — all but Edenton-Chowan Schools — beat the four-year state graduation rate of 83 percent last year, both Camden County Schools and Edenton-Chowan fell below this year's four-year rate.

CamTech High School had a 69.2 percent rate.

"Perquimans County High School has implemented many programs to ensure the success of our students," said Teresa Beardsley, the district's spokeswoman. "We have many things in place to continually progress monitor our students. We also have specific programs inclusive of alternate settings to promote students success. Some of these programs include the alternative learning center (ALC), grad point classes and credit recovery."

According to Assistant Superintendent James Bunch, the ALC helps students who have problems with things such as attendance, the need to recover credits and students who need home base services due to medical reasons.

"Students in the ALC have unique

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STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS

Mark Powell of Albemarle RC&D (center left) and Hertford Town Council member Carlton Davenport (center right) meet with contractors Friday at the site of a new marina being planned behind the Hertford Police Department.

Marina project poised to start

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

Long awaited plans to build a small marina in Hertford are about to unfold.

Contractors met with town officials Friday for a pre-bid conference at the site of the marina behind the Hertford Police Department.

The marina is just one of the projects set out in a STEP grant program the town was a part of.

Local citizens identified issues they wanted to tackle in Hertford and got a \$100,000 state grant to make those improvements. Of that, \$25,000 was set aside for the marina. The total cost of the marina project is estimated at about \$100,000.

Once the bids are in Sept. 26, the town board will be asked to approve them. Once that happens the winning contractor has 15 days to start construction and 90 days to complete the project.

The next town board meeting is Oct. 13. That means if approved, the project should be finished by late January or early February.

The plans call for a six-foot-wide pier extending 170 feet out into the Perquimans River. Water, sewer and electrical service will be provided out to the end of the structure, which forms a "T" shape.

The contract will also call for replacing the wooden deck on a

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Utility changes proposed

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

Hertford is looking to cap the amount of money people are charged to connect to town utilities.

The current policy has no cap. New customers that haven't had a good payment history in the past are required to pay a deposit based on the two-month average for utility bills at that address. The amount of the deposit depends on the utility use of the previous tenant.

The town council agreed last week to advertise a public hearing on Oct. 13 that would cap the deposit at \$350. Because Hertford is part of a municipal power agency, the town is required to advertise any change in rates for two consecutive weeks.

The issue of utility deposits was brought up by Anne White when she was a member of the Hertford town council. She has since stepped down so she could take a seat on the Perquimans County School Board. She believes the town's policy unfairly hurts working people.

A compromise crafted by Hertford Town Manager Brandon Shoaf was presented last week to help address that. He's proposed that the town continue to offer a waiver of the deposit if the customer can provide a letter of good credit from a former utility provider. People who buy a home in Hertford are also exempt from paying.

The deposit is designed to protect the town from getting stuck with unpaid utility fees if a person leaves

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Stallings named top superintendent in 16-county area

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

Dwayne Stallings has been named top school superintendent in the 16-county region of northeastern North Carolina and will now advance on to a state-wide competition.

Stallings is in his eighth year as superintendent in Perquimans. He's been with the school system for 21

years and in education for 29 years.

He won for Region 1. There are eight regions in the state.

Last year's regional winner was Michael Dunsmore from Tyrrell County.

"I am honored to repre-



STALLINGS

sent the northeast," Stallings said last week.

The winner of the state-wide award will be named at the meeting of the N.C. School Boards Association in Greensboro in November.

Last year's state winner was Brady Johnson from Iredell-Statesville Schools.

"Dr. Stallings is always looking ahead and keeping the Perquimans County

Schools on top of the curve," said Susan Cox, the chairperson of the Perquimans County School Board.

Stallings said he's proud of the accomplishments the school system has been able to make.

"I think if there is one area that I'm pleased about is the Perquimans County schools have been able to form relationships with the

community," he said. "Communication is so important. It takes everybody working together. I hope we've been able to build some bridges in that area."

The school system has also been able to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to technology. Through a grant by Golden LEAF and county commission

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Events night focuses on 'buy local' incentive

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

Perquimans County High School is adding some themes to the traditional Friday night football games to try and perk up attendance help local businesses and make the events more fun.

Friday night's home game against Manteo is "Local Business Night."

"We're trying to boost morale and support for athletic events here," said Lau-

ra Moreland, the school's new athletic director and assistant principal. She said Guy Webb, the other new assistant principal is playing a key role.

"Mr. Webb is a fantastic asset. We're really trying to get the crowd going. If we support the boys, morale gets higher and they will do even better."

At home games Pirate merchandise will be on sale, and this Friday is "Local Business Night." Moreland said the theme is not just a one-night expression but part of a bigger effort to "buy local."

This Friday local businesses are free to set up

Speaker touches area students

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor



STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS

Ashli Felton jams with speaker Reggie Dabbs during an assembly at Perquimans County High School.

talks to groups larger than the more than 400 attending Monday's event in Hertford.



DOBBS

But often he said he manages to touch more than one person with his program.

"At John A. Holmes there was a girl who was weeping today," he said before the performance. "She ran out of the auditorium."

Later he was told the girl's mother is suffering from cancer and was traveling to get treatment. He was told the girl wanted

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