

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY



"News from Next Door"

SATURDAY, JULY 22, 2023

\$1.50



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Winfall, Edenton voters to decide contested races

As of Tuesday, only 3 had filed for open seats in Hertford

BY REGGIE PONDER AND VERNON FUESTON
Staff Writers

Voters in Winfall and Edenton will have contest-

ed races to decide in this November's municipal election. But as of the presstime for this story on Tuesday, only three candidates had filed to run for the three open local government seats in Hertford.

Filing ended Friday at noon for municipal offices

in all three towns.

In Winfall, voters will have a contested race for mayor, as both Preston T. White and Delane Ritter Jr. have filed to run for the town's top elective post.

But it appeared the race would be the first in more than three decades in which

Fred Yates' name wouldn't be on the ballot. Yates, who has served as Winfall mayor since the early 1990s, had not filed for re-election as of Tuesday, and he previously said he didn't plan to seek another four-year term this year.

Cynthia Gale White Cun-

ningham has filed for one of two open town commissioner seats in Winfall.

White has served nearly 11 years on Winfall's Board of Commissioners and currently serves as the board's mayor pro tem. He mounted an unsuccessful campaign for mayor against Yates in

2019.

"I would like to see the town continue to move forward and prepare for the future," White said.

White, who is 57 and lived in Winfall all his life, said he believes that with the right

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Christmas in July



PHOTO COURTESY GARY LICO

Santa Claus, also known as Gary Lico, bursts into laughter during Story Hour at the Perquimans County Library, Thursday, July 13, as part of last week's Christmas in July events in Hertford. The Jolly Old Elf treated a group of young readers to four books, including an updated version of "Twas the Night Before Christmas." Afterward, the kids "ambushed" him with hugs. See story, page A3.

Group offers 'safe place' for discussion

Edenton Racial Reconciliation Group meets each Thursday

BY VERNON FUESTON
Staff Writer

EDENTON — "Find me another group that has been together for this many years, who have nothing

in common, and still come together every Thursday at 7 p.m.," the woman said.

The woman was a member of the Edenton Reconciliation Group, an informal discussion panel that's been meeting weekly for years, though there is some disagreement over just how long. Some say the group

started in 2014; others say it started a year or two later.

The group has been remarkably resilient, surviving not only disagreements but the COVID-19 pandemic. On this particular night, July 13, eight members were present in person at Edenton Methodist Church on Virginia Road, and another

four joined the meeting virtually, an innovation the group adopted during the COVID epidemic.

Members physically attending the meeting included Emma Bonner, Dr. Benjamin Speller, Jessie Rivers, Deborah Davis,

See EDENTON, A6

Jordan promoted to Perquimans DSS head

Former social work supervisor took reins at agency June 1

BY REGGIE PONDER
Staff Writer

HERTFORD — Longtime social worker Angela Jordan became social services director for Perquimans County last month.

As director, Jordan supervises the work of the 31-person staff at the Perquimans County Department of Social Services.

One of the main challenges she's facing, she said, is hiring staff, especially because the agency has compete with DSS agencies in neighboring counties with the salaries it can pay.

"Staffing is always a challenge," Jordan said.

Still, she has filled seven positions and has had only one employee resignation since becoming DSS director on June 1.

Jordan credits the working conditions at the agency for helping to attract employees.

"I think we have a very good working relationship here," she said.

Jordan said she works to boost morale for employees of Perquimans DSS, and she knows that employees respect each other and enjoy working together.

Another challenge is finding and maintaining enough

foster care homes and respite homes for children.

But Jordan said that Perquimans is fortunate right now to have all its foster children placed in homes either in Perquimans or in neighboring Chowan or Gates counties.

Jordan started at Perquimans DSS in October 2007 as a social worker in Investigative Assessments and Treatment within Child Protective Services. Beginning in July 2012 she was promoted to social work supervisor, a position she remained in until being promoted to director of the

See JORDAN, A2

Warrants: Former Hertford employee embezzled gasoline

Sheriff: Downing misused card 31 times, stole \$1.6K in gas

BY JULIAN EURE
Managing Editor

HERTFORD — A former Hertford public works employee is accused of misusing a town gasoline credit card more than 30 times to steal more than \$1,600 in gasoline, the Perquimans County sheriff said.

Keenan Ny'rek Keishaun Downing, 21, of the 200 block of King St., Hertford, is charged with 14 counts of felony embezzlement by a public official or trustee, according to arrest warrants. He's being confined at Albemarle District Jail in lieu of a \$280,000 secured bond.

According to warrants, Downing was employed as a Hertford public works employee when he "did



DOWNING

embezzle and corruptly use and misapply" a town gas card on May 6 "in the amount of \$80."

He would go on to misuse the gas card 13 more times over the next month and a half, allegedly stealing another \$867.43 in gas from the town. His last illegal use of the gas card was for \$55 on June 27, according to warrants.

Perquimans Sheriff Shelby White said Monday that Downing also misused the town gas card for his own personal use an additional 17 times during roughly the same time period in neighboring counties. He said that brought the total

See EMBEZZLE, A6



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