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Hoke County's newspaper since 1905

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, December 23, 2015

Nightmare coming, paving of N.C. 211 West highway open to 1 lane in places until mid-summer

By Catharin Shepard Staff Writer

One of Hoke County's busiest roads will be resurfaced next year and could be turned into a four-lane highway sometime after 2020, according to the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Workers will patch the two-lane N.C. 211 between Raeford and Aberdeen and then

resurface it. The work will start in January or February and wrap up in July 2016, according to the NCDOT.

"They're going to patch along 211 and then they're going to repave the whole route from the Moore County line to East Palmer Street, a total of 14.9 miles," NCDOT spokesperson Ginny Inman said.

The road, which is one of the most heavily traveled in the county, is also on NC-

DOT's radar for a widening project, Inman

"They have programmed funds to study right-of-way and widening 211 from West Palmer Street/Mockingbird Hill Road in Raeford to 15-501 in Aberdeen," she said.

The state will examine ways to turn N.C. 211 into a four-lane road between Raeford and Aberdeen, and engineers will start studying the area in 2020. It's unknown

when construction of the road might start, but it would be at least several years after the study is completed and possibly longer.

Just the fact that it's on the schedule for study is a big step in the process, Inman

"It's on the department's radar and it's one of those that scored high enough to be in the STI, which is a great sign for the (See PAVING, page 8)



Christmas lunch

Veterans and their spouses enjoyed a free Christmas luncheon last week, provided by the Hoke County Public Library. The Hoke County High School choir performed music for their entertainment. (Catharin Shepard photo)

Filing closes, incumbents challenged

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD Staff writer

Five people, including four Democrats and one Republican, have filed to run for election to two available seats on the Hoke County Board of Commissioners.

Joe Alston and Lonnie Baldwin, both Democrats, and William "Brownie" Brown, a Republican, filed to run against incumbents Commission Chairman James Leach and Commissioner Bobby Wright, who are Democrats.

Voters selecting the Democratic ballot in the primary election in March will choose two (See FILING, page 8)

Men charged with teen prostitution





two men last week for allegedly being Rodger involved in the

Investigators with the Hoke County Sheriff's Office arrested

prostitution of a minor.

Deputies arrested Joseph Edward Morse, 31, (See PROSTITUTION, page 2)

This Week

Fight over dog ends peacefully Page 3



Williamson

Hoke County Schools Superintendent Dr. Freddie Williamson is one of four candidates for the 2016 National Superintendent of the Year.

The School Superintendents Association announced the list of

Williamson finalist for national top superintendent finalists last week.

> Williamson, who got his start as a classroom teacher, has worked in education for more than 30 years. He has served as Hoke County Schools superintendent since 2006 and has also served in leadership roles for organizations such as the North Carolina School Superintendents Executive Board, North Carolina Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Board

of Directors, Sandhills Regional Education Superintendents Council, FirstHealth of the Carolinas Advisory Board and Fayetteville State University Educational Leadership Advisory Board. He also serves as an adjunct professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

The other candidates include Thomas Tucker of Princeton City

Schools in Cincinnati, Pamela Moran of Albemarle County Schools in Charlottesville, Virginia and Steven Webb of Vancouver Public Schools in Vancouver, Washington.

Co-sponsored by Aramark, VALIC and AASA, the 2016 National Superintendent of the Year will be announced at AASA's National Conference on Education February 11-13 in Phoenix, Arizona.



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OTHER STUFF

By Ken MacDonald

While the world elbows its way around Christmas, here's wishing for you a peaceful and bright holiday.

Each morning lately, I've been picking up the morning paper (well, reading its website), and that bully Trump has been asserting himself into every edition, saying one mean and repulsive thing after another.

One morning while reading his repugnant drivel, a light came on outside at the neighbor's and she became visible in the darkness. She was carrying, like a baby, her pet beagle mix who was no longer able to go outside on his own because of a cancerous tumor. Later that day, I learned, she had to have him put down.

The contrast was stark. A woman humbling herself in the dark, in pain at the impending loss of her long-beloved pet; a blowhard braggart inflicting pain on a national (See OTHER STUFF, page 2)



Monday fire

A burning charcoal grill left on a balcony at Stone Gables Apartments apparently erupted into flames Monday requiring a response from Puppy Creek, Hillcrest and Rockfish fire departments. Residents who evacuated the apartment building reported that the fire was put out quickly and didn't damage any of the other units. (Catharin Shepard photo)

BROWSING THE F



List takers take an oath in preparation for tax listing time, which begins January 2. They are Betty McFadyen (left to right), Eli Shankle, Julian Love, C.C. Conoly, Alma Lovette; and Willa McLauchlin.Administering the oath is Clerk of Court E.E. Smith.



"The first thing I ever won," says Paul Wall, winner of the Chamber of Commerce color TV set. Money for the raffle goes to street decorations for Raeford.

Other stuff

(Continued from page 1) scale.

At the end of a flight over the weekend, I saw an assertive woman try to push past other passengers as they reached for the carry-ons, but a man popped out of his seat and blocked her with his elbow and shoulder like he was playing football. Where's

A minute or two later, another lady did just the opposite. "Sir, would you like to go ahead?" she

simply is what we make it. Again, here's wishing for you a peaceful and bright holiday.

January 1st.

47 Years Ago December 26, 1968

Miss Mabel McDonald, Hoke County Director of Public Welfare, reports a very generous county at Christmas. "We have given names of more than 50 families to clubs, church groups, school organizations, scouts and so on during the past two weeks," she says. Hardly a week passed since last Christmas that one Sunday School group did return to their family to help an elderly couple.

An elderly couple and their "feeble-minded cousin" are getting a new house for Christmas, thanks to a Sunday School class. Hugging a weak heater fire, they ward off a wind that whistles through their current house. The "careening" structure "apparently has never seen a coat of protective paint."

25 Years Ago December 26, 1990



The Upchurch Sixth Grade Chorus, under the direction of Barbara S. Lawson (left), are (first row) Sharon Conoly, Karen Epps, Becky White, Jane Austin, Deborah Davis, Susan Bounds, Cindy Conoly, Suzanne Jordan, Jennie Monroe, Jo Ann Register; (second row) Debbie Ward, Jodi Upchurch, Agnes Campbell, Debbie Wilkes, Judy Daniels, Laura Pannell, Renna Brown, Carolyn White, Sallie Bray, Peggy Graham, Carol Rose Page, Kay Clifton; (third row) Diane Inman, Kim Meeks, Jackie Campbell, Marie Hendrix, Jody Allen, Linda Bratcher, Sibyl Lee, Lindy Ramsey, Rosemary Inman, Yvonne Thomas, Theresa Wright, Margaret Rogers, and Pamela Dockery. Barbara Douglas was absent.

Prostitution

(Continued from page 1)

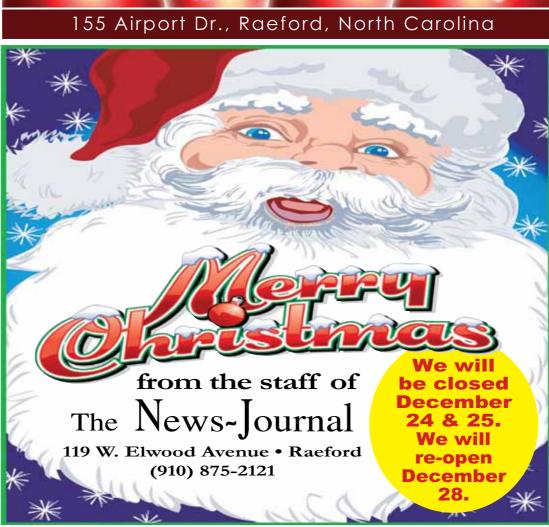
of the 400 block of Martin Drive in Raeford on three counts of facilitating a minor's prostitution; and Arnold Wayne Rodger, 49, of the 400 block of Pendergrass Court on four counts of facilitating a minor's prostitution. Both men

were arrested December 18 and held under \$10,000 unsecured bonds.

Authorities with the sheriff's office reported that they started looking into the case regarding a 17-year-old girl who was involved in prostitution beginning December 10, 2015. The investigators tracked down Morse and Rodger, who allegedly confessed to the activity and were arrested without incident.

Juvenile services will be involved in the ongoing investigation regarding the victim, according to the sheriff's office.









Have a Merry

Christmas! from the Bleecker

bituaries

James R. Dees Sr.

James Robert Dees Sr. died Thursday, December 17, 2015.

Survivors include his wife, Joan; children, James R. Jr., Ronald, Timothy, and David Mark; siblings, Sara Conoly, Dan Dees, Joyce Connally, Allen Dees, Allene Dees Stiffel, Malcolm Dees, Linda Lovette, and Donnie Dees; eight grandchildren; and six greatgrandchildren.

The funeral was held at 2 p.m. Sunday, December 20 at Rockfish Baptist Church.

Linda F. Pate

Linda F. Pate, 69, of Raeford passed away on Wednesday, December 16, 2015 at UNC Medical Center in Chapel Hill.

She was born in Fayetteville on August 29, 1946 to the late Mr. and Mrs. Vander and Ada Blue.

Survivors include her husband of 40 years, Bobby Pate of Raeford; daughters, Georgia (Dave) Stubbs of Cameron, Sallie (Lauren) Sherrill of Gray's Creek, and Linda (Darrin) Jacobs of Gray's Creek; grandchildren, Ronnie (Nina) Jones of Carthage, Savannah Stubbs of Cameron, Lauren Sherrill II, Kelsey Sherrill, and

Logan Jacobs, all of Gray's Creek; sister, Margie (Dennis) Stanley of Raeford; brothers, Michael (Jennifer) Blue and Freddie Arnett, all of Cape Coral, Florida; nieces, Jada and Jenna Blue, both of Cape Coral, Florida; and nephews, Michael Blue Jr. and Jackson Blue, both of Cape Coral, Florida, and Aaron Blue of Denver, Colorado.

The family has scheduled a private service.

In lieu of flowers, please make contributions to the family.

Jerry Bullard

Jerry Bullard, 52, of 111 Edwards Road, Aberdeen died Sunday, December 13, 2015.

The funeral was held at 2 p.m. Saturday, December 19 in Turnpike Baptist Church in Wagram. Burial was in Lighthouse Baptist Cemetery in Aberdeen.

Ariyana S. Gordon

Ariyana Skye Gordon, 17 months, died Tuesday, December 15, 2015 at Levine Children's Hospital in Charlotte. She was the daughter of Charles and Kristina Gordon. She was born July 24, 2014 in Matthews.

In addition to her parents, she

is survived by two sisters, Alexiya and Karolyne Gordon; maternal grandparents, Edward (Mel) and Susan Hedrick of Monroe; paternal grandparents, Ronald (Buddy) and Angela Gordon of Raeford; and numerous other family members.

A funeral mass was held at 9 a.m. Saturday, December 19 at St. Luke's Catholic Church, 13700 Lawyer's Road, Mint Hill. A private graveside service was held at Jackson Springs Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Carolina's HealthCare Foundation, Levine Cancer Institute, The Cancer Research Innovations Fund, c/o Carolinas HealthCare Foundation, 1221 E. Morehead St., Charlotte, NC 28204.

Online condolences may be made at www.briggsfuneralhome.

Daisy M. Alford

Daisy Mae Alford, 77, of Raeford died Friday, December 11, 2015.

The funeral was held at 3 p.m. Thursday, December 17 in Freedom Chapel AME Zion Church. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Fight over dog ends peacefully

The fight between a former Hoke County Sheriff's Deputy and a retired Army soldier over a former military working dog ended peacefully last month.

Former Hoke deputy Deon Fuller reportedly gave the dog, a pit bull named Howard, back to Alex Reimer, who was the dog's handler while serving in the military overseas.

Reimer posted that he got the dog back shortly before Thanksgiving. The Facebook page, Bring Howard Home, received over 35.000 likes but has now been taken down.

Fuller was fired from his job at the Hoke County Sheriff's Office after news of the fight over Howard went viral on Facebook. Fuller posted on social media that he believed he was fired because he refused to give Howard back to Reimer, but Sheriff Hubert Peterkin stated that Fuller was let go because "his services were no longer needed."

Howard was reportedly the first bomb-sniffing pit bull to be certified as a working dog in the U.S. Army. Howard and Reimer were deployed in 2012. Reimer lost track of the dog after he returned to the country and passed Howard on to another handler.

Reimer, who now lives in Colorado, started looking for Howard and located him in the Fayetteville area. He reportedly contacted Fuller and asked for him back. When Fuller turned him down, Reimer launched a Facebook page seeking support to get his former K-9 partner back.

It wasn't clear how the dog

went from being a military canine to being adopted out to a family. Apparently, at some point Howard ended up in a shelter and was adopted by a police department Fuller worked for with the intent of making Howard a police dog. When that didn't pan out, Fuller adopted the dog.

That shouldn't have happened, Reimer said.

"Howard was adopted to this family incorrectly, and I should have been notified once Howard was up for retirement as I was his first handler," he wrote on the Facebook page, which has since been taken down.

Reimer's family announced plans to start a new Facebook page called "Howard's Search and Rescue," but the page was

Man on parole arrested for break-in



nection with a breaking and

Authorities with the Hoke County Sheriff's Office arrested a man earlier this month in con-

Jackson entering. Officers arrested Cleon Jackson,

27, of the 800 block of Edinburgh Road in Red Springs on one count of breaking or entering and one count of larceny after breaking or entering. He was arrested December 14 and released on a \$25,000 secured bond.

Jackson was charged in connection with a reported break-in at the home of John Oxendine on Gold Hill Road on October 3. Oxendine reported the break-in

to authorities, who then started an investigation and learned that property stolen from the victim's house was sold to a third party.

Deputies arrested Jackson when he reported in to his probation officer. Jackson was serving probation in connection with a charge of breaking and entering and possession of stolen goods in Robeson County earlier this year.

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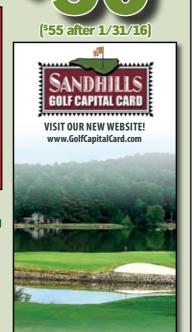
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2016 SAVINGS CARD

rug bust nets heroin Investiga-



Brand

fice reportedly found heroin and drug paraphernalia at a home in Raeford last

tors with the

Hoke County

Sheriff's Of-

week and arrested one person on drug charges.

Authorities arrested Gary Brand, 52, of the 100 block of Cheer Lane in Raeford on charges of possession with intent to deliver heroin, maintaining a drug dwelling and possession of drug paraphernalia. He was arrested December 17 and held under a \$30,000 secured bond.

The sheriff's office Special Operations Unit had been conducting an investigation into the month, according to officials.

possible sale of heroin from the residence and identified Brand as the suspect in the case. Officers executed a search warrant at the house and reportedly located five bindles of suspected heroin along with empty bindles and other drug paraphernalia.

This is the second time authorities have executed a search warrant at that address in the last

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Congratulations to Dr. Karen Smith for being recognized as North Carolina's 2015 Family Physician of the Year by the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians [NCAFP]. Karen, thank you for making a difference in the health and wellness of our community.

- from all the dedicated professionals at cape fear valley health







KAREN L. SMITH, MD

Hoke Hospital brings Cape Fear Valley's nationally recognized quality to Hoke County and southwestern Cumberland County. Hoke Hospital's Emergency Department and Medical/Surgical Unit are open.

VIEWPOINTS

Eating, solving problems, listening to guitar

Bill Frisell is a great guitarist I've listened to on records for years. He operates in the jazz/ blues genres for the most part and has recorded some stuff that is pretty far out. I like to go far out every now and then and Bill can take you there.

Big Boss Bubba and I look for good concerts in Carrboro where he lives and he gave me a call a little while back. I was excited to hear that Bill Frisell would be performing at the Carrboro Arts Center. The Arts Center is a great small venue with stadium seating, which makes every seat a good one. Bubba got the tickets and the plans were made.

While he and I love music, our concerts are as much about visiting with each other as the music. Bubba and I have known each other since 1960 and I have known his wife Vicky since they first met around 1970. It is always nice to get off the farm and get a little taste of urban life, especially a town like Carrboro, which is progressive and not too congested. We have similar world views and like to discuss politics and issues of the day. They help me catch up on the world as well as their growing family.

Maggie and Susie, their two daughters, both moved away from the area a few years back. Maggie and husband Eric moved up to the New York City area for Eric's work. Susie and her husband Jamie have been living as successful yuppies in San Francisco. Their worlds have been far removed from ours.



With two young children, Maggie and Eric have concluded that Carrboro has a lot to offer compared to their expensive urban world and they have moved back, much to the delight of the grandparents. Susie has just had her first baby and they will soon see that having children changes everything. I expect we will see them heading this way before too long. I got a chance to visit with Maggie and her two cute kids.

After we dissected the world situation, complained about the cluelessness that seems to have this country in its grips and failed to solve the problems, we headed out for dinner at a nice local restaurant named Glass Half Full. The Dicksons are regulars there and the food was great. After dinner, we took Vicky home and Bubba and I headed out for the concert.

We were not very early and the crowd looked very sparse as we settled in. Within minutes, the crowd picked up to near capacity. These people know the drill and have the time element down pat.

Bill Frisell came on with a drummer and bass player and they soon eased into the music. It might be more appropriate to say that they waded cautiously into it. The musicians seemed tentative, and later we learned that the drummer was not the regular

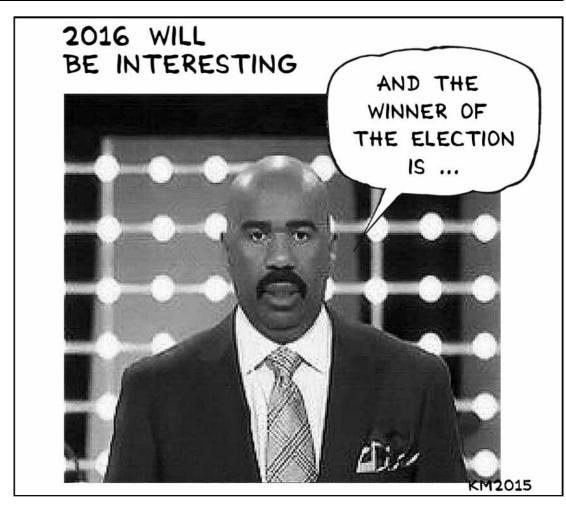
drummer. While he was a fine drummer, it was apparent that he was not familiar with the music.

The performance had some high spots, but it was very laid back. I often wanted them to kick it up a notch or two. Several times, I wanted to jump on the drums myself and inject a rock beat as the music seemed to call for it. Apparently, this is not Bill's desire and he continued in a subdued style. He seemed perfectly happy with this and they produced some beautifully textured sounds, the subtlety of which might have been lost in louder and more raucous arrangements.

While the drummer worked hard to react to the music and add his own flavor, the bass player looked constantly at Bill with a broad smile on his face. I don't know if this was a look of encouragement, or just pure pleasure. His playing, while good, was not great, leaving me to wonder about the relationship between him and Bill. Playing music is a very personal endeavor in which the success of the group can hinge on the relationships of the players. In my experience, this is highly important, and more critical than technical playing ability. It sure looked like Bill and the bass player had the personal part down pat. Bill wowed us with his excellent playing and the audience was very appreciative, demanding encores.

All in all, it was another wonderful night in Carrboro with the Dicksons. Hopefully, there will be another soon.

More later.



And this is how election is shaping up

The candidate filing period for the 2016 elections closed Monday. with nearly 2,000 hopefuls signing up to vie for election to various local and statewide offices.

Here are five quick observations about the 2016 candidates and races:

1) Early winners. In the 120-seat N.C. House, 41 candidates don't have primary or general election opponents, meaning they essentially won two-year terms on Monday. An additional 16 House seats will be decided in the March 15 primary because only one political party fielded candidates in those districts.

In the Senate, 13 incumbents didn't draw any primary or general election opposition, meaning they were essentially re-elected, barring a successful write-in campaign, which is highly unlikely. In two additional districts, the winner will be known after the primary.

In other words, about a third of the General Assembly was all but elected when the filing period ended. And by the end of the primary, 57 House seats and 15 Senate seats will be decided, or 42 percent of the legislative seats.

2) Decisions, decisions, Why can't every state legislative district be like Senate District 36, which includes Cabarrus and Union counties? There, four Republicans are vying for the GOP nomination and two Democrats want their party's line on the ballot. Voters in that district will have choices in both the March primary and the November

One on One Patrick Gannon, Capitol Press Association

general election. That's a good thing. 3) Show me the money. Several of the top fundraisers among Senate Republicans aren't opposed in either the primary or general elections, so they can use all of the money they raise to help fellow Republicans in contested districts. Senate leader Phil Berger and Sens. Harry Brown, Brent Jackson, Bill Rabon, Kathy Harrington and Jerry Tillman are all unopposed in 2016. This doesn't bode well for Senate Democrats. Republicans hold a veto-proof majority in the Senate.

Also, wouldn't you think Democrats would at least want to try to unseat some of the most powerful Republicans in the Senate, even if the odds are against them?

By the way, House Speaker Tim Moore and a few other members of the House leadership team – Reps. Mike Hager, Jason Saine and Kelly Hastings, to name three – also won't have opponents next year.

4) Brannon's back. Cary obsteician and Tea Party Republican Greg Brannon filed to run in a primary against U.S. Sen. Richard Burr at the 11th hour of the candidate filing period, throwing a curve ball into what seemed would be an easy run to the GOP nomi-

nation for Burr. Two little-known Republicans also are vying for the GOP nomination. Four Democrats and a Libertarian also want Burr's Senate seat.

Brannon, who unsuccessfully challenged U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis in a Republican primary in 2014, is again touting his grassroots support intrying to defeat an "establishment" politician in the year of Donald Trump. In an email to supporters announcing his run, Brannon called Burra "Washington insider," saying he would have more than \$5 million to "tar-and-feathermy campaign and attack me personally."

The Democratic U.S. Senate candidates can only hope Burr uses much of his money during primary

5) Free rides. Some guys have all the luck. State Rep. Mitchell Setzer, a Catawba Republican, is one of them. In a General Assembly career that spans parts of three decades, he's faced only one election opponent since his first race in 1998, a weak challenge from a Libertarian back in 2002. This year is no different. Setzer is unopposed in both the primary and general elections. He'll remain in the House for his 10th two-year term, beginning in 2017.

Over in the Senate, Sen. Harry Brown, a Jacksonville Republican and Senate majority leader, doesn't remember what it's like to have an opponenteither. Next year will mark Brown's fifth consecutive election season without one.

TODAY'S HOMEWORK (Notes on Education) "Folks in the accountability camp like to say 'we can't throw money at the problem.' In fact, they apparently prefer actively pulling money away from the areas where the greatest problems exist. It is lunacy to believe that a testing program can do anything to help children who are being denied the same educational resources provided to their peers in wealthy communities. And to compare those under-funded students with their better-funded peers is nothing short of cruelty." John Kuhn, "The Big Error of School Accountability" "The most important competencies in young children can't be tested—we all know this. Naming letters and numbers is superficial and almost irrelevant in relation to the capacities we want to help children develop: self-regulation, problem solving ability, social and emotional competence, imagination, initiative, curiosity, original thinking — these capacities make or break success in school and life and they can't be reduced to numbers." - Valerie Strauss, "How 'twisted' early childhood education has become – from a child development expert"

Virtual charters aren't in best interest of kids

By Chris Fitzsimon N.C. Policy Watch

The education of thousands of North Carolina students and millions of taxpayer dollars are currently at risk in the latest school privatization scheme that continues to draw far too little attention from the media and even many education advocates.

Two online charter schools opened in the state this fall operated by two different for-profit companies, one of which, K12 Inc., has a scandal-plagued record in other states.

A provision snuck into the budget in the 2014 legislative session ordered the State Board of Education to approve two virtual charters as pilot programs. Only two companies applied to run the $on line \, schools, guaranteeing \, they \,$ would both be selected.

Numerous studies have raised serious questions about the performance of virtual charters and K12 schools in particular.

A report by a Washington think tank about a California virtual charter run by the company found dramatically lower test scores than traditional public schools, startling high dropout rates, questionable attendance figures and a host of other problems.

Two months ago, a report from the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford found that there are problems with online charters in general, not just the ones run by K12.

The report was funded by the Walton Family Foundation, a strong advocate for the charter

school movement, and found that students in online charters made far less progress than their counterparts in traditional public schools.

One of the authors of the report said the gains in math were so small that it was "literally as though the student did not go to school for the entire year.'

This week brought maybe the most compelling evidence of all that the General Assembly made a terrible decision to order the State Board to approve the schools.

The former education commissioner of Tennessee, Kevin Huffman, described his experience of the last four years overseeing the virtual charter in his state, also operated by K12, on the education blog The Seventy Four.

Huffman, himself a strong pro-charter and school choice advocate appointed by conservative Republican Governor Bill Haslam, pulls few punches in his essay that includes this summary.

"From these modest beginnings and with the help of an unscrupulous operator, an inept school district, and the generally screwed-up politics of education, the worst-performing school in Tennessee opened and remains open to this day," Huffman says.

Huffman goes on to describe how the virtual school was plagued by operational problems from the beginning and that K12 sent lobbyists instead of education specialists to meetings called to talk about the miserable performance of students at the school.

His entire essay ought to be required reading for every member of the General Assembly and the State Board of Education.

Huffman clearly believes that the legislation that created the virtual charter in Tennessee, run by the same company running one in North Carolina, benefitted the company, not the students who enrolled.

And he has some important advice for ideologues intent on dismantling public schools in the name of school choice who seem to believe that every form of privatization is a good one and that the market will decide.

"The 'marketplace' fails when we are not able to ensure that parents know that the school they are choosing has a running track record of failure," Huffman says. "Clearly, there is a critical regulatory role, and we cannot simply assume that an unfettered choice environment will automatically lead to good outcomes."

That's exactly what the folks running the General Assembly assume, that privatization and "choice" are always better.

But the evidence could not be clearer. Virtual charters, especially ones operated by K12, are not in the best interests of students or taxpayers.

It's not school choice anyway. It is education hucksterism enabled by the rigid ideology of legislative leaders that holds that every new privatization idea in education is better than traditional public schools that are underfunded and understaffed with teachers who are underpaid and underappreciated.

North Carolina officials need to listen to the former education commissioner of Tennessee.

Gerrymandering legal but not fair

By Thomas Mills Politics North Carolina

Monday was the end of the filing period to run for office in North Carolina in 2016. Dozens of legislative seats are uncontested and only a handful of districts will even be competitive. And the GOP is patting itself on the back because the North Carolina Supreme Court upheld their redistricting again.

Just because the courts say it's legal doesn't make it good for democracy or for our state. The judges said the legislative mapmakers stayed within the guidelines of law. The decision was 4-3 along party lines. Not a ringing endorsement.

Sen. Bob Rucho and Rep. David Lewis, the architects of the districts, said the districts are "fair and legal."

They may be legal according to the Supreme Court, but they aren't fair. Fair would be if the state's districts reflected the will of the voters. In 2014, Republicans received a little more than 50 percent of the vote but maintained veto proof majorities in both houses. In 2012, voters cast 51 percent of the votes for Democrats in Congressional elections and ended up in a 9-4 minority. That's not fair. That's rigged.

Republicans like to argue that Democrats did the same thing when they were in the majority. That's a tired argument coming from people who ran on a platform of reforming government and making it more transparent. The old maxim, two wrongs don't make a right, applies here.

The answer would be redistricting reform that would allow an independent commission to draw districts

Before he was Senate President Pro-tem, that's what Phil Berger supported. Now that he's got power, he's more interested in protecting his majority than listening to the will of the people.

The party that claims competition makes everything better, doesn't want competition in elections. The losers are the people of North Carolina.

The only debate is between the ideologues and the pragmatists in the Republican Party. So much for a market place of ideas.

Editor's note: After writing this piece, the author entered the race for Congress in the 8th district.

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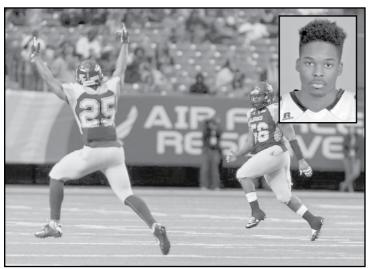
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Thompson/High Point lose on last-second shot

Tarique Thompson, a 2013 Hoke High School graduate, now High Point Panthers basketball forward, played against NC State last week at PNC Arena in Raleigh. The final score was NC State 76 High Point 73. Thompson is averaging six points per game and 14 minutes per game for the Panthers who are 8-4 overall and are expected to win the Big South Conference this year. Against the Wolfpack, Thompson had two points, two rebounds and played 12 minutes. His career high is 19 points, which he scored against Bakersfield last year. (Photo by Hal Nunn)



Darden helps NC A&T win Celebration Bowl

Jamaal Darden, #25, a 2014 Hoke High School graduate, now N.C.A&T Aggie safety, played in the inaugural Celebration Bowl in Atlanta, Georgia and helped the Aggies win the Historically Black College and Universities National Championship. Late in the game, his defensive-tipped pass stopped Alcorn State from scoring the go-ahead touchdown. It was his first start of the season but he plans on more to come in 2016. (Photo by Kevin L. Dorsey) Photography.

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Commissioners wrap up business for the year

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD Staff Writer

The Hoke County Board of Commissioners held its last, brief meeting for 2015 Monday night, approving a consent agenda and hearing updates on the county's tax collections.

The board approved an eightitem consent agenda including resolutions declaring three parcels of land on Branchwood Lane and Blue Springs Road as surplus property, and approving a budget amendment for the Sheriff's

The budget amendment removed about \$165,000 from

Earn masters degrees

Dwight McNeill, both of Ra-

eford, recently graduated from

Troy University. Bodoh earned

a Master of Science degree in

Criminal Justice. McNeill earned

a Master of Science degree in

Two Hoke students at Trov

University were named to the

school's Chancellor's List. Thom-

as Tevepaugh and Kathryn Broom

earned grade point averages of at

the Provost's List at the school,

having earned a grade point aver-

Births

Jeremy and Mary Holling-

sworth announce the birth of

Madalyn Kate Hollingsworth

on November 25, 2015 at

FirstHealth Moore Regional

Hospital. Grandparents are Wil-

liam and Vera Hollingsworth

of Raeford and Lynnville and

Jennifer Johnson of Virgie,

The News-Journal accepts

birth announcements from parents

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University

senior major-

ing in Math-

ematics, was

selected to re-

ceive a Duke

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Campbell helps

game

Appalachian State

win first-ever bowl

Tobias Edge-Campbell, a 2014

Hoke High School gradu-

ate, now Appalachian State

University offensive lineman,

helped the Mountaineers win

their first-ever bowl game in

the Raycom Media Camellia

Bowl against Ohio University.

Edge-Campbell saw playing

time this year on the offensive

line and as a back-up center.

In this photo, Edge-Campbell

(left) is shown with teammate

Jesse Chapman (right) as they

hold the championship trophy.

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Gets scholarship

Philip Houston was named to

Strategic Communication.

Chancellor's List

Named to

least 4.0.

Christopher Bodoh and

the sheriff's office budget in regular salary and wages and hospitalization insurance, and then added the money back in for salary and wages overtime, FICA/Medicare and N.C. Retirement.

"Due to a forecasting shortage in the overtime line item, funds are being moved from within the current jail budget to continue to pay overtime in the Fiscal Budget Year 2015-2016," according to the transfer document.

The commission also approved contracts for school nursing services and the county's appraisal software in the tax office.

The board heard an update on

tax collections from Hoke County Tax Collector Daphne Dudley. So far, the county has collected over \$21 million of the roughly \$27 million tax levy on property. The county also collected about \$500,000 in November toward back taxes people owed.

About \$2 million back taxes are still owed to the county by taxpayers from prior years, Dudley presented in tax paperwork.

The board watched a brief video from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and held a closed session for personnel discussion before adjourning. The board's next meeting will be in January.

School Briefs

Energy Foundation Scholarship for \$3,500 for the 2015-2016 academic year. She is the daughter of Terry and Bill Caton of Raeford.

Earn medical

certificates

Hoke students at Central Carolina Community College were among those earning certificates in the medical field recently. Jessica N. Florez and Jonatan Luvianos-Trani earned Nurse Aide 1 certificates. Romeita Lucas and Cody Whittington earned Phlebotomy Technician certificates.

Graduation was held December 10 at the Dennis A. Wicker Civic Center.

McGeachy gets

masters

Captain Domonique McGeachy completed a masters degree in Adult Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner



McGeachy

from the University of South Alabama in Mobile December 12. McGeachy was inducted into Sigma Theta Tau National Nursing Honor Society. She maintained a 3.82 grade point average and will begin working on a doctoral degree in the spring.

McGeachy is the wife of Jerel McGeachy of Raeford.

McLaughlin gets masters

McLaughlin graduated this month with a masters degree in English Education and African American Literature

Kayla



McLaughlin

from North Carolina A&T State University. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. in the fall. She currently teaches 10th grade English in Greensboro. She is the daughter of Tracey Ferguson and Yancey McLaughlin. Her grandparents are Charles Ferguson and the late Carrie Ferguson.

Marriage Licenses

Recently issued by the Hoke County Register of Deeds, by date issued; date of marriage listed if different, county of marriage listed if outside Hoke:

Nov. 17

• Rene Perez Godinez and Flor Gisela Diaz-Jimenes, both of Saint Pauls, Married Nov. 25 in Robeson County

Nov. 19

• Warren Anthony Johnson Jr. and Desiray McLaurin, both of Raeford. Married Nov. 25 in **Guilford County**

Nov. 23

• James Andrew Morello II and Shannon Cathleen Strup, both of Raeford. Married Nov. 30

• Bianca Pamela Rodriguez and Jorge Villegas, both of Saint Pauls

Nov. 25

· Bobbie Jean Shock and Steven Richard Collier, both of Fayetteville. Married Dec. 1

• Papa Mbaye of Fayetteville and Linda Faye Jacobs of Laurinburg Dec. 7

Gaudencio Marabel Perez

and Juana Callejas Antonio, both of Shannon Dec. 9 Shemeeka Lashonda Moore

of Raeford and Alvin Lamont

Douglas of Wagram. Married Dec. 12 Dec. 10 • Michelle Reddic and Garford

Benhoward McRae, both of Ra-

eford. Married Dec. 11 • David Nelson Williams of Fort Campbell, Ky. and Jessica

Lea Crawford of Hope Mills Dec. 14 • Matthew Kenneth Henson and Daysi Markela Diaz, both of

Fayetteville Dec. 15

• Kyle R. Sine of Springfield, Ohio and Heather Ann Hilbert of Raeford

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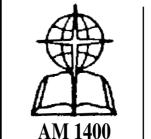
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Suzanne Balfour (right) works with Tina Cook (left) from Europa International selecting frame designs for Ra-404 South Main Street • Raeford, NC