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# Triangle

## Student-transfer limits proposed

FROM STAFF REPORTS

### WAKE, DURHAM

#### Ricks to speak in two bookstores

Willie Ricks, a veteran of the civil rights movement, will speak Saturday at the Blacknificent Book Store, 2011 Poole Road in Raleigh, at 4:30 p.m. and at the Know Book Store in Durham at 7:30 p.m.

Ricks, who was active in civil rights marches and has been credited with coining the slogan "Black Power!" will talk about "Black Power and Politics." For more information, call 682-7223.

#### USO director will address forum

**RALEIGH** — George Tuskey, director of the United Services Organization, will talk about the new USO lounge at Raleigh-Durham International Airport on Thursday at a forum sponsored by the Wake County Citizens for Effective Government.

Tuskey will discuss opportunities for volunteers to assist military travelers during stopovers between flights.

The forum will take place Thursday from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at Borders Books, 8825 Six Forks Road at Strickland Road.

For more information, call 847-9901.

### CHATHAM COUNTY

#### Two arrested in shooting at signs

Two Apex men were arrested Sunday in Chatham County after someone shot at road signs.

Paul Borge, 22, of 1320 Salem Church Road and Kevin Wood, 23, of 104 Kensington Hill Way were arrested by Chatham deputies on N.C. 751 near the Wake County line, according to a Sheriff's Office news release.

The deputies had received reports that someone was shooting in the area of 816 N.C. 751. A deputy stopped the car the men were driving and weapons were confiscated.

The two were released after posting \$1,000 bail and will appear in court Sept 15.

### JOHNSTON COUNTY

#### Biotech center construction begins

**CLAYTON** — Contractors have broken ground on Johnston County's new biotechnology skills training center near Clayton.

Centurion Construction of Raleigh is building the 30,000-square-foot building, which will cost \$4 million to construct and equip. Johnston Community College will operate the center and offer some classes through N.C. State University.

Michael DeSherbinin, the county's economic development director, said Centurion hopes to begin work on the building this month. The training center is slated to open in August 2005.

The county is paying most of the tab, with nearby pharmaceutical companies chipping in the rest. The center sits on 8 acres donated by Novo Nordisk.

#### Armed robber shoots Clayton man

A Clayton man who refused to hand over his money to an armed robber was shot during the attack Sunday night.

After buying a pack of cigarettes at a convenience store on Market Street in Smithfield, Christopher Dean Christensen, 18, found a man waiting for him in his car, Smithfield police said. The man held a gun to his head and ordered him to drive to a vacant lot on Market Street, police said.

When Christensen refused to hand over his money, the man struck him in the head with a handgun. The man also shot him in the arm, grabbed \$100 cash from his pocket and fled, police said.

Christensen drove himself to Johnston Memorial Hospital. Police have no suspects.

### HOW TO REACH US

Have a story idea or comment? The newsroom number in Raleigh is 829-4520 or (800) 365-6115.

#### A lenient policy has left some Johnston schools over capacity and others under.

BY MARTI MAGUIRE  
STAFF WRITER

Zachary Lychalk had been at Cleveland Elementary for two years when the Johnston County school system reassigned him to the new Polenta Elementary in 2001. He had friends at Cleveland, he liked his teachers, and he knew his way around.

So his mother, Lisa Lychalk of Smithfield, got permission to let Zachary stay at Cleveland. Two years later, she got permission

for her other son to go there, and this year her daughter started kindergarten there.

Next year, she'll ask for Zachary, now 10, to attend Cleveland Middle, where his friends will be going, though he's assigned to McGee's Crossroads Middle. Ideally, his younger siblings would follow.

Multiply the Lychalks' requests by a few hundred, and the problem with Johnston's student-transfer policy — the most lenient in the Triangle — becomes clear.

"Once they're in that school district, then it follows a long way through all grade levels, and you're adding to the problem when you allow whole families,"

said school board member Kay Carroll. "We've been able to accommodate most folks' desires for a long time, but it's just out of hand with the schools becoming so overcrowded."

A new policy being considered by the board would tighten restrictions on student transfers into schools that are already over capacity. It would no longer allow siblings to follow their older brothers and sisters to crowded schools.

Cleveland Elementary is about 300 students over capacity, while Polenta is 100 under.

Johnston approved 2,627 student transfer requests this year, including 250 requests to attend the same school as a sibling. This

amounts to 10 percent of the district's more than 25,000 students going to schools other than those to which they're assigned.

Officials describe the policy as a holdover from the days when Johnston was a rural county that hadn't built a school since 1969. In the past five years, the county has added eight schools and more than a thousand students a year.

Transfer requests to keep whole families in the schools they were accustomed to stopped the new schools from filling up. Ten Johnston schools are at least 100 students under capacity, while five are at least 100 over.

Johnston school board Chairman Fred Bartholomew said the board will likely approve the new

policy in September.

"We don't want to make it any harder on parents than we have to, but we have to make sure that we put kids in the schools that have space in them," Bartholomew said.

The school system has started looking more closely at requests for transfers. This year, it denied about 10 percent of all requests, up from 2 percent in 2001.

In most Triangle counties, students are allowed to stay at a school if their assigned district changes, but their siblings can't follow them to schools that are already at or above capacity.

Staff writer Marti Maguire can be reached at 829-4841 mmaguire@newsobserver.com.

### MEASURING THE NEUSE FLOOD



Casey Kennedy, an N.C. State University graduate student, paddles a kayak trailing a monitoring device on the Neuse River at the N.C. 42 bridge near Clayton. Kennedy and David Genereux, an NCSU professor, are gathering data on discharge into the Neuse in conjunction with East Carolina University. The river was expected to crest at 16.5 feet Monday in Smithfield, 1.5 feet above flood stage.

PHOTO FOR THE NEWS & OBSERVER BY MICHAEL MCLOONE

## Neighbors can't share electricity

*In Clayton, extension cord can get both disconnected*

BY ELLEN SUNG  
STAFF WRITER

**CLAYTON** — When the power gets cut off, some people scrounge up the cash to pay the bill.

Others apparently find that too tedious and just snake an extension cord to a neighbor's house.

If you live in Clayton, don't take the second route. The town council voted unanimously Monday to outlaw the use of extension cords to locations without service. Both locations will have their power disconnected.

The amendment to the town's customer service policy arose after a Clayton woman allowed her neighbor to power his home using an extension cord to one of her outlets. She later changed her mind but didn't want to confront him, town manager Steve Biggs said. The town then discovered it didn't have the authority to force the man to remove the cord.

Citing safety concerns, Biggs brought the issue to the town council.

"Trying to live in a residential unit off of what one extension cord can provide is not a good thing," Biggs said.

In other business Monday, the board: ■ Learned that the town had failed a federal test for lead in drinking water in some homes. The test covers only homes built from 1982 to 1986 with copper tubing and lead joints. Over time, water can corrode the copper or lead, contaminating it as it flows from the tap.

Since 1994, the town had passed muster on the tests. But this year, five of 20 homes tested had higher levels of lead than the 0.015 milligrams per liter allowed. Clayton water customers will receive letters explaining the tests and how to protect themselves.

"I want to stress that the lead is not in our drinking water," public works and utilities director Tim Simpson said. "The lead is coming from the individual customers' plumbing and plumbing fixtures."

The town also is required to do further tests on additional sample sites. Mayor pro tem Bob Satterfield questioned why the town should spend so much money when few homes are affected.

"This is the biggest waste of money I've ever seen in my life," Satterfield said.

■ Heard that its \$1.5 million fire station is two months behind schedule, because a manufacturer plans to deliver the steel structure for the building about 10 weeks late. The station is now slated to open May 1.

Biggs said contractor D.S. Simmons likely will be fined for the lateness of the project.

■ Heard from consultants CH2M Hill that the town will need to find 7 percent to 9 percent more revenue to cover its water and sewer costs over the next four years. The extra money could come from reserves, higher fees, or a combination.

Staff writer Ellen Sung can be reached at 829-4565 or esung@newsobserver.com.

## Indictments are returned in jail escape

BY BENJAMIN NIOLET  
STAFF WRITER

**DURHAM** — Omar Lionel Reed was indicted Monday on charges that he overpowered a guard and sprinted away from the courthouse 15 minutes after he was convicted of murder.

A grand jury returned true bills of indictment against Reed charging him with robbery with a dangerous weapon, first-degree kidnapping and assault on a government official. Reed, 25, has been in Scotland Correctional Institution in Laurinburg, serving a 15-years-plus-life sentence.

Before he was convicted of murder

in 2002, he was known to authorities to have connections to the Bloods gang. He was known as "Bloody Omar," according to records of the state Department of Correction. In June 2000, authorities said, Reed and another man pulled up to a house and got into a confrontation with two women. Reed forced the women across the street and shot William Teasley to death, authorities said.

In December 2002, a jury convicted Reed of first-degree murder, kidnapping and burglary. Moments later a female detention officer took Reed to the courthouse basement to lock him

in a cell. When the officer removed Reed's handcuffs so he could wash his hands, Reed held a sharp object to her throat, authorities said. Reed handcuffed her and ran.

His attorney saw him run from the courthouse and notified deputies.

About seven hours after he ran, Reed asked for change for \$2 at a convenience store. The assistant manager, Cindy Sherlin, recognized him from a wanted poster and called police.

Staff writer Benjamin Niulet can be reached at 956-2404 or bniulet@newsobserver.com.

## Chatham group wants forums on Briar Chapel

*Proposal would be county's largest*

BY JESSICA ROCHA  
STAFF WRITER

**PITTSBORO** — Chatham County commissioners Monday postponed setting the date for a public hearing to discuss Briar Chapel, the county's largest-ever development proposal.

They did so after about 100 people showed up at the commissioners' meeting requesting two county-sponsored public forums where residents, Briar Chapel representatives, consul-

tants, commissioners and others could discuss their concerns.

If held before the public hearing, the forums would help answer questions and bring up concerns about the inevitable impact such a large development would have on the county, those who addressed the commissioners said.

"We benefit, you benefit, the developers benefit. There is no downside here," said Martin Spitzer, a retired municipal lawyer.

Spitzer was one of six people representing Chatham Citizens for Effective Communities, a controlled-growth advocacy group that requested the forums. The

group's representatives said they were not categorically against the development.

"Neither CCEC nor any of the other speakers to follow are here to oppose Briar Chapel," said Jeffrey Starkweather, a lawyer who also heads the Chatham Coalition, a grass-roots political action committee.

"We are here, instead, to request that you provide a detailed review process with the depth and breadth such a large and complex development requires — a review that will result in the best possible development for Chatham County."

Mitch Barron, the local repre-

sentative for Briar Chapel's developer, California-based Newland Communities, agreed to the forums.

"We are glad to do this," Barron said. "It's in the benefit of the county."

Briar Chapel would be a 1,589-acre, 2,389-home development just a few miles south of Chapel Hill off U.S. 15-501. County commissioners unanimously rejected the proposal two years ago and ordered that a more specific set of development guidelines be written.

In April, the commissioners approved the Compact Communities Ordinance, and in June, Briar Chapel was dusted off, updated

and resubmitted.

Though it appeared that the forums would be held and that consultants, commissioners and residents would be present, the commissioners did not formally agree to them. It is still unclear whether the forums will be recorded government meetings, as the Chatham Citizens group requested.

For the past month, Newland has been holding other meetings and had planned four more in the county, Barron said.

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