What's Up

2 lake deaths

A 14-year-old Cornelius boy and a 47-year-old Sherrills Ford man died in separate accidents on Lake Norman last weekend. The teenager, whose name has not been released by authorities, suffered fatal head injuries when his personal watercraft apparently collided with another on Saturday. A day earlier, Barry James Wayne of Sherrills Ford drowned while scuba diving Friday evening. Authorities believe Wayne became trapped under a dock in a Catawba County cove. His body was discovered Friday morning by a fisherman. Both deaths continue to be investigated.

Design a logo

The Mooresville-South Iredell Chamber of Commerce is seeking a new logo and is asking graphic designers and others to try their hand at creating it. The chamber asks that the logo be suggestive of Mooresville's important characteristics, especially racing and Lake Norman. The logo should also incorporate the colors of red (PMS 186), blue (PMS 287), and black. The logo should be submitted for three sizes: for business cards, letterhead, and apparel. Logos must be received by the chamber no later than Sept. 14. The chamber's executive committee will review the entries a declare a winner, who will receive a $500 award. Submissions can be mailed to Attn: Logo Contest, MSI Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 628, Mooresville, N.C., 28115. For more information, call Abigail Jennings at 704-663-3655.

Rabies clinics

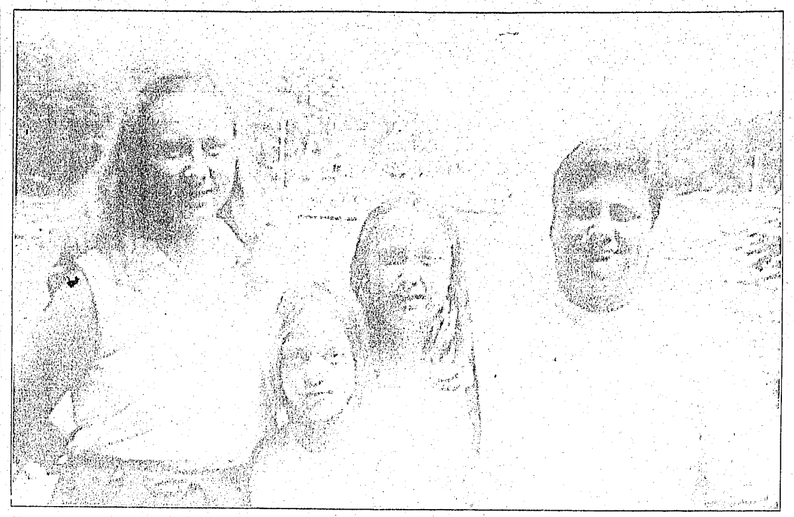
There will be several rabies vaccination clinics in South Iredell in the coming weeks. Shepherd Elementary School in Troutman will host a clinic on Tuesday, Sept. 11 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. A clinic will also be held at the Iredell County Fairgrounds in Troutman on Tuesday, Sept. 18 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. In Mooresville, clinics will be held from Monday, Sept. 17 through Saturday, Sept. 22 at the Village Animal Hospital during normal business hours, as well as Monday, Sept. 24 through Saturday, Sept. 29 at the Randall Veterinary Hospital during normal business hours. Cost: $6.

Nature programs

Lake Norman State Park will host a canoe nature trip on Sunday, Sept. 9 from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Canoes and personal flotation devices will be provided. The event is free, but requires reservations to 704-528-6350. The park is also asking people to help with this year's Big Sweep, when thousands of volunteers across the state will work to clean up North Carolina's waterways. Lake Norman State Park will host its Big Sweep efforts from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For details, call 704-528-6350.

Cope with disaster

Are you prepared to deal with a disaster? The American Red Cross will provide a free program on Saturday, Sept. 15, in Mooresville, offering people a look at the impact of disasters on people and communities. Also, the program will describe the services and roles provided during disasters by the Red Cross. The program is from 1-3 p.m. in Shinn Hall next to St. James Episcopal Church, 851 Shinnville Road north of Mooresville. For reservations, call Linda Simowitz at 704-664-2127.



New Lake Norman Lakekoopors Jay and Selah Bunzoy and their children, Hannah, 9, and Ellen, 11.

Witnessing the changing waters

Jay Bunzey has seen the waters of Lake Norman change over the years — from clear and clean to questionable quality.

Bunzey, and wife Selah, were recently named the first Lakekeeper for Lake Norman, the biggest manmade lake on the Catawba River chain.

"In 1968, there was virtually nobody discharging treated sewage in Lake Norman," says Jay Bunzey. "Through the early 1980s, the water was clear enough to see down 15 to 20 feet in places," he recalls. "Now, 33 years later, there are approximately 35 (regular) sewage discharges into the Lake Norman watershed... and sometimes these plants do not discharge a product fit for human contact."

The Bunzeys see the explosive growth in the Lake Norman area and the accompanying sewer package treatment plants as just one of the many challenges they face in their new role as Lakekeeper. They were recently chosen by their peers to head the two-year-old group of Covekeeper volunteers who investigate water quality problems on Lake Norman.

The group serves as a neighborhood watch group for Lake Norman, the second on the Catawba to have a team of Covekeepers. By having local residents participate, the Catawba Riverkeeper is able to have eyes and ears in every nook and cranny where the Covekeeper program is established.

The Bunzeys also see the intentional discharge of untreated sewage from large boats as a growing concern on Lake Norman. "They are disgusting to say the least," said Jay Bunzey. "There are pump-outs on the lake, but some of these people think they can get away with it."

The couple, along with daughters Hannah, 9, and Ellen, 11, live on a quiet cove on the western end of Lake Norman, so they have firsthand experience with some of the problems.

The lack of buffer zones on Lake Norman is starting to take its toll, the Bunzeys feel. Lawns that extend to the water's edge, and stone riprap instead of vegetation, are slowly eating away at the natural beauty of Lake Norman, they contend. "Once these buffers are destroyed, all this pollution flows straight into the lake," notes Selah Bunzey, who like her husband, moved to this area several decades ago.

"The water quality in Lake Norman is still good by state standards," notes Selah Bunzey. "And we want to maintain that standard and work to make it better still."

Education is the key, she feels. "We have a long way to go, but I believe people are beginning to understand how important Lake Norman is to this region. Through public education and enforcement of pollution laws, we can keep Lake Norman clean and a viable resource for generations to come."

About 40 people actively participate in monthly Lake Norman Covekeeper meetings and have been trained to spot pollution and water quality problems.

Jay says his father instilled in him a sense of respect for the environment. "My dad used to say: 'Animals don't foul their own nest, why should we?' I think that's a good way to look at things."

Lakekeeper

Continued from page 1A

been living in the Lake Norman area for the last 30 years. He and Selah, who works for an investment company, live on the Denver side of the lake and have two daughters, Hannah, 9, and Ellen, 11.

Bunzey said the biggest challenge he sees on Lake Norman is overdevelopment. "There are four counties that border the lake and each has different rules and regulations," he noted.

About 40 people actively participate in monthly Lake Norman Covekeeper meetings and have been trained to spot pollution and water quality problems. Norman joins Wylie, southwest of Charlotte, as the second lake to have an all-volunteer group to assist the Catawba Riverkeeper in water-quality monitoring efforts.

The Covekeeper program began in 1998 and Steve and Pat Cashion were jointly named the first Lakekeeper on Lake Wylie in 1999. Training programs for Covekeepers are underway on Mountain Island Lake and Lake Wateree. A Lakekeeper will be chosen for those lakes within the year.

This year, the Catawba River — which winds its way from the mountains to the sea along 225 miles of the Carolinas — had the dubious distinction of being designated one of the nation's Top 13 threatened rivers by American Rivers. The Covekeeper system will help ensure that water quality in the threatened river is protected, Lisenby said.

For more information about the Covekeeper program, call Pam Beck, coordinator of volunteers, at 704-373-1916.

Money woes

Continued from page 1A

told county commissioners Tuesday. "I assure you that we are aware of this requirement and will take steps to meet this requirement during the 2001-2002 year," she added.

Although the record of the money's use showed wide variations from what it was originally designated for, the full $3.2 million was spent on the projects for which the money was appropriated, said Williams. "I want to reassure you that this is what you approved it for and that's what it was spent for ... We haven't lost any money, and we did these projects. It just doesn't look that way in the books."

School board chairman Vaughn Sprinkle said that the school board was not aware of the requirement to request approval from the county for changes in excess of 10 percent of the originally appropriated amount.

Williams further explained that the bookkeeping problem arose from incorrect coding of expenses. The school system uses codes to represent different expense categories. When money is spent on a particular project — replacing a roof, for example — that money is coded in the appropriate category — roofing, for instance. But during the 2000-2001 school year, Williams explained, coding was done inaccurately, with projects from one category coded under another category.

The result, Williams said, is the appearance that money budgeted for one project category was used for another.

As an example, Williams said although the records show the district spent only $8,493.90 on roofing, the district actually spent $306,200, much closer to the $300,000 appropriated for roofing. She also said whereas it appears in the books that the school system spent only $504,250.44 on boiler/HVAC, the schools actually spent $634,000, much closer to the $681,000 budgeted for that project category.

When asked by commissioners which employees were responsible for coding the expenses last year, she said "most" of the coding was done by former Associate Superintendent for Administration and Finance Harold McManus and Deputy Finance Officer Linda Stamper. McManus resigned in June amid allegations that he was improperly reimbursed for moving and living expenses. Stamper remains in her position.

Commissioners said they wanted assurances that the school system's financial problems are being fixed. "It harms the credibility of this board, the school board, and the administration," said Commissioner Steve Johnson. "It looks from an accounting standpoint that you just had a mess over there."

Commissioner Karen Ray said it appeared the school system's financial crisis was "a monster."

SaraTice, the commissioner's chair, said she felt better knowing that the money was actually spent on the projects for which it was appropriated, even if it does not appear that way on the books.

Johnson said he was particularly disturbed by the school system's recent financial problems because he had been previously told by Supt. Howard Coleman that the system's financial troubles were fixed. "He told me twice he had it fixed, and he didn't," Johnson said.

Coleman was suspended by the school board last month because of possible "incompetence" or "misdeed" after it was revealed that the school system ran up a $1.8 million deficit during the 2000-2001 school year and that the 2001-2002 budget included $3 million in expenses for which the system would not have the revenue.

Saying she had never seen a financial situation like the one being suffered by the school system, Finance Officer Terry Haas told commissioners, "I will do my best, and that's all that I can give you at this point."

Williams also told commissioners that she expects the Office of State Auditor Ralph Campbell to answer by today the school system's request that his office conduct an audit of the school system's finances. If the auditor does not honor the request, she said an independent auditing firm will be hired to do the work.

In other business Tuesday, commissioners passed a resolution supporting the effort to renumber N.C. 136. The Town of Mooresville has requested the Department of Transportation change the highway's number to "3" in honor of the late race driver, Dale Earnhardt, Sr.

3rd grade pre-testing

Continued from page 1A

Shepherd, assistant superintendent of personnel and instruction.

Board member Karen Hart agreed. "It shows a commitment on the part of our K-2 teachers," she said.

But amid the good news of rising pretest scores, Shepherd pointed out some bad news: There's still an obvious achievement gap between the scores of black and white students.

Though the gap in reading scores was only 12.7 percent, with 69.7 percent of black students and 82.4 percent of white students scoring proficient, there was an achievement gap of 28.7 percent in the math scores — 63.1 percent of black students and 91.8 percent of white students scored proficient.

A surprised Hart pointed out that the achievement gap in math was more than double that of reading.

Shepherd said there was definitely "room for improvement," though he said he believed the problem is more in "cultural differences" then ethnic ones.

He said the figures indeed "create a sense of urgency" and call for a broadening of instructional methods — an action that, he said, has already been taken.

In other action, the Mooresville school board:

•Was updated on the district's student enrollment, which reached 4,141 on the tenth day of school. However, as Supt. Bruce Boyles predicted, the number of students increased through Labor Day, and the count was 4,172 as of last Tuesday — only seven students shy of the earlier enrollment projection of 4,179.

At this time last year, district-wide student enrollment was 4,013.

•Was reminded about the upcoming dedication ceremony for the high school addition/renovation. An open house for members of the community will be held on Sunday, Sept. 16, from 3:30-5 p.m.

•Heard a report from Shepherd on the recently-released Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores. "We're not pleased," he told board members, "but there certainly is hope."

The district's SAT scores, which have fluctuated dramatically over the past nine years, have generally remained well above the state average. Last year's seniors received a total score of 996 — 58 points down from last year's high of 1054. Mooresville's scores last year topped the state average by four points, but fell 24 points shy of the national average.

School administrators say they had strategies in place weeks before the scores were released in an effort to help students make the grade. Strategies include offering comprehensive SAT preparation with consultants, loading new computer software that could help students diagnose their academic weaknesses, and, for the sake of familiarity, planning to offer the SAT on-site at Mooresville High this year.

"We are committed to raising the scores over the year," said Shepherd.

The board members approved of the "fast action" taken by school administrators. Added Chairman Frank Fields, "I'm glad to see we've got a game plan."

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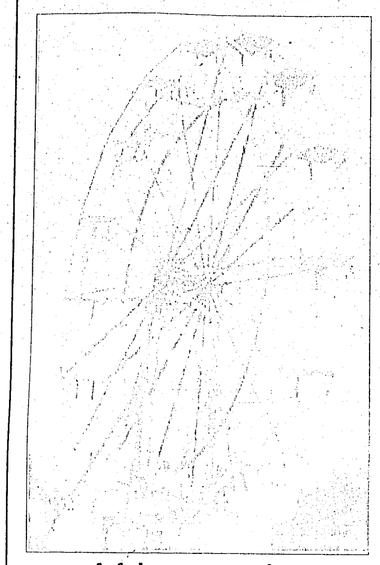

A fair assumption

What's a county fair without a ferris wheel? At the Iredell County Agricultural Fair, which runs through Saturday at the county fairgrounds in Troutman, the ferris wheel is an annual staple. Other rides — plus games, livestock exhibits, pro wrestling and music — are on tap from 5 p.m. til midnight, plus nightly fireworks at 9:30. Admission is $5 (children under 6 free). (Photo by Tyrone Summers)

Lake Norman YMCA opens new ball field

Last January, the Lake Norman YMCA was blessed to receive a $100,000 grant from the Rockwell Foundation. The grant money has been put to good use to renovate the 30-year-old athletic field at the 'Y.'

On Saturday, the new field will be celebrated with a grand opening event. Festivities begin at 9 a.m. with the Rockwell family joining a youth sports practice for a 9:45a.m. ribbon cutting ceremony.

The public is invited; there will be hot dogs, sodas, and cotton candy. A dunking booth and moonwalk are just to name a few of the funfilled activities planned. There will be gifts for the first 100 children in attendance.

Work on the new athletic field began in June with grading, sodding, and enlarging the space to incorporate a full size athletic field. Backstops, an irrigation system, bleachers, fencing, storage and playground were also included in the expansion. the installation of lights is planned for next spring.

The Lake Norman YMCA serves more than 1,500 children each year in its youth sports program and another 400 individuals in adult sports leagues.

In the summer, the field is vital to the success of day camp, which serves over 250 kids each week, officials say.

The new Rockwell Athletic Field will serve more of the community by expanding on existing sports programs, while offering a variety of new programs.

The Rockwell Foundation was established by Col. Willard F. Rockwell in 1956 through shares of what is now known as Rockwell International.

Are you ready for a hurricane?

Hurricane season is here. Are you prepared? Planning ahead reduces panic and frustration that often follows a disaster, says Sandra Compton, family and consumer education agent for the Iredell County Agricultural Extension Service.

Here are some tips and suggestions from Compton for preparing for a hurricane:

Create a family disaster plan. Explain the danger of hurricanes, fire, tornadoes and floods to children, and develop a system for working together in a crisis situation.

Establish meeting places inside and outside your home and outside the neighborhood. Make sure everyone knows when and how to contact each other if separated. Decide on the best escape routes from your home.

Establish a family contact out-of-state. Make sure everyone knows the contact's phone number.

Post emergency telephone numbers near the telephone. Teach children how and when to call 911. Instruct household members to turn on the radio for emergency data.

Stock emergency supplies and assemble a family disaster supplies kit. Learn basic first aid and CPR.

Keep important family records in a safe deposit box or fire-proof container.

If you are instructed to leave your home, lock doors and windows, turn off appliances and take essential items with you.

Practice and maintain the family disaster plan. Review the plan every six months.

For more information, call Compton at 704-873-0507.

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