

Assistants make the grade

Cape Fear schools say fed standards met

By Venita Jenkins
Staff writer

A majority of teacher assistants in the Cape Fear region have met federal educational requirements that allow them to stay in the classroom.

Those who failed did not return to the classroom this school year.

The federal No Child Left Behind

legislation required assistants who help with classroom instruction to be "highly qualified" by June 30.

That means assistants who were hired prior to Jan. 8, 2002, had to either obtain an associate degree or earn 48 semester hours. They also had the choice of completing staff development or community college course work.

Those who decided to take that route had to pass written tests.

Assistants hired after Jan. 8, 2002, had to meet the educational requirement before being employed.

Teachers assistants paid with Title I money were affected by the guidelines. However, some systems in the region had all teacher assistants meet the

federal standards. Title I provides federal money to school systems with a high percentage of poor children to help ensure that all children meet academic standards.

"We required everyone to meet the requirements because we move teacher assistants around," said Patricia Faulk, the personnel director for Bladen County schools. "We can't pick and choose."

About 79.84 percent of teacher assistants statewide had met the educational requirements during the 2004-05

school year, according to the state Department of Public Instruction. Information on the 2005-06 school year was not available.

Only one of the 128 teacher assistants in Bladen County failed to meet the deadline. Many of the teacher assistants who were eligible for retirement decided to complete the educational requirements, Faulk said.

"A few employees were caught and had to do something," she said. "They

See ASSISTANTS, Page 6B

Yard debris earns money

■ Cumberland County expects a paper mill to pay more than \$100,000 a year for mulch that will fire its boilers.

By Andrew Barksdale
Staff writer

Tree limbs, leaves and pine straw from lawns are being recycled to burn boilers at a plant and earning Cumberland County money and accolades.

Since December, 24-ton dump trucks from International Paper's mill in Riegelwood, near Wilmington, have been hauling mulch from the county's Wilkes Road landfill. The county expects to gross more than \$100,000 a year from the deal.

At the landfill one afternoon last week, a forest machine scooped up mangled pieces of tree limbs and emptied the debris into a large grinder. Brown "rough cut" mulch rolled off a conveyor belt, and a bulldozer pushed the material into a mound about three stories high.

Trucks from International Paper make as many as four trips each week. The mill feeds its boilers mulch and other wood scraps to create steam, which is needed to dry paper.

See MULCH, Page 4B

Lois Warfel, a county librarian, died Memorial Day of lung cancer. She wasn't a smoker.



Lois Warfel understood others' needs

Lois Warfel was a small woman with a personality large enough to command a room full of people.

She was talkative and spoke five languages. She knew everybody.

"She and I were opposites," says her tall husband, Bill, with a sad smile.

Her birth name was Lae Yee. Bill called her by both names over the course of their 18-year marriage, during which he adopted her daughter, Claudine.

Lois Warfel died of lung cancer on Memorial Day, she was not a smoker.

Bill says his wife believed until the end she would pull through. He thought so, too.

Warfel, 53, was a county librarian.

See PITTS, Page 4B



MYRON B. PITTS

UMOJA FESTIVAL



'A good exercise in culture'



Staff photo by Mike Spencer

Joseph Ghee, 17, with a trombone, performs Saturday with the E.F. Smith High School marching band during the Umoja Festival at Seabrook Park. Top, people stroll through the vendors' area.

Hundreds come for the food, fun and finds

By Claire Parker
Staff writer

Tents full of cuisine from Trinidad, laundry bags made by a woman from Grenada, authentic African clothes from Ghana and good old American hamburgers and hot dogs were scattered throughout Seabrook Park on Saturday for the Umoja Festival.

The festival showcases African-American history, supports black business and promotes unity

which is what Umoja means.

The midday heat did not deter hundreds of people from setting up lawn chairs under shady pine trees to enjoy the music, dance, food and crafts.

Karen Smith sat under a tent while her grandchildren cooled off after performing karate for the crowd.

It was her first time at the 15th annual event.

"This is something everyone should come out to," she said as she

surveyed the grounds. Her main mission was to sample all the food for sale.

While she waited, she was a one-woman audience for Nutifafa Tuprah and Baba Jamal Koram who rapped on two tall, slender jumbay drums.

The men were going to play in a drum circle later in the day.

Koram, who came down from Alexandria, Va., for the festival, was there for a storytelling session, but he played drums to pass the time be-

cause the stories usually started in the evening when people settled in, he said.

Wearing blue, regal-looking African clothing, Koram sat perched above his drum while children and adults leisurely walked around the vendors' tents.

"This is a good exercise in culture," he said. "You see everyday folks, traditional African dress wearing folks, basketball playing

See FESTIVAL, Page 4B

Flavors of home bring Katrina's evacuees peace

By Claire Parker
Staff writer

Michelle Johnson started cooking Friday night and continued straight through until 5:30 a.m. Saturday, preparing jambalaya, jambalaya pasta and red beans and rice.

She wanted the smells and tastes of Cajun cooking to be a happy reminder to the people who left New Orleans a year ago after Hurricane Katrina.

Mary Flood and Ruth and James McCloud reminisced about the strong scent of Community Coffee, the tangy sting of Louisiana-made hot

sauce and the perfect texture of Camellia brand red beans, while the food Johnson prepared was being set up in an corridor at Marketfair Mall.

Good food can bring all kinds of people together, and the gathering gave those displaced by Hurricane Katrina a chance to sample their beloved foods and say thanks to the Fayetteville community for embracing them after the storm.

The past year has seemed like a downward spiral, according to Johnson, but after she moved to Fayetteville her life was lifted by

See KATRINA, Page 4B



Staff photo by Angela K. ...

Ruth McCloud talks about living through Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans during an event sponsored by GOTDAD at Marketfair Mall on Saturday.