

StarNews



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TODAY MON TUE

 81°/69° 80°/68° 79°/67°

Complete forecast, B8

STATE



Governor's race projected to be 'marquee' matchup

No matter the outcome in November, the state will likely feature the country's costliest and hottest contested governor's race, political experts and campaign officials agreed. **A2**

BUSINESS



For logging crews, business is booming

A "perfect storm" of weather, economy and consumer demand has sparked a logging boom in eastern North Carolina. Among the items in demand: Wood pellets that will be shipped through the port in Wilmington. **A16**

WORLD



'Surfing swami' seeks the perfect wave in India

EDUCATION

OVERWHELMINGLY

WHITE

Selection process at Forest Hills saw lack of minorities in popular school program



Marisol Bonilla teaches her 1st grade Spanish class at Forest Hills Elementary School earlier this year. The program's admission policies resulted in participation overwhelmingly from white children. STARNEWS FILE PHOTO

By Adam Wagner
StarNews Staff

WILMINGTON — Anna Lee was not surprised when she walked into a meeting for Forest Hills Elementary's Spanish Immersion Program and found the room filled with white faces.

"I had it on my radar already that the program was relatively segregated because I know people who have older kids there," Lee said. "It wasn't exactly a revelation."

She counted three Hispanic parents



Greenwood



Markley

— including her husband— and two black parents among the roughly 45 people in the school's auditorium.

During that meeting, Lee recalled, Forest Hill's principal, Deborah Greenwood, was asked how students would be chosen. The principal told attendees she wasn't sure yet.

That evening, the

school handed out kindergarten applications — nearly four months before the registration period was to begin. By the end of the meeting, 12 white and three Hispanic children had already applied.

"Why wouldn't they know?" Lee said. "You're going to have a meeting, you're accepting applications. How are you picking them?"

Parents who had already been questioning the principal's lack of outreach to

SEE SCHOOLS, A5

Coming up

This is the first article in an examination of factors shaping area schools.

■ The battle between an active parent volunteer and New Hanover County Schools.

■ Interviews with teachers about the culture within Forest Hills Elementary and their experiences with New Hanover County Schools grievance procedures.

■ The struggle for diversity in a Neighborhood Schools system.

SCHOOLS

From Page A1

minority communities saw further evidence the program — in which students learn English and Spanish — favored white



Lee kids. When acceptance letters also went out in advance of the registration period, the racial divide was even clearer. And when the 2015-16 school year started, 73 percent of those in the immersion program were white. Conversely, the school's overall population is 44 percent white.

"It's almost like a secret society," said Dana Thompson Dorsey, a University of North Carolina education professor.

Over the next year, parents voiced concerns, culminating in one filing a formal grievance to New Hanover County Schools, alleging discrimination at Forest Hills.

And though NHCS Superintendent Tim Markley refuted those allegations, the parents are encouraged by changes in the works now.

"I know you have some folks who don't think the process was particularly fair, but we changed the process," Markley said. "I think the new process is better. Do I think the old process was discriminatory? The answer to that is no. But like we do at anything else, we make the process better."

For the 2016-17 school year, immersion will move 2 miles away to Gregory School of Science, Mathematics and Technology. Along with a new school, the program will have a new enrollment policy, with a lottery replacing the previous first come, first serve.

"Few would accept a policy that would say the richest, wealthiest, most well-off people get first choice," said Derek Black, a University of South Carolina law professor who specializes in education policy. "But if you call it first come, first serve, it sounds like it's neutral and fair."



Edgerton

Clyde Edgerton, a local author who has two children in the program, filed the grievance with the district. "White parents were given notice of the opportunity to get into the immersion program, but equal opportunity of notice to black or Hispanic parents was not offered," wrote Edgerton, a Kenan Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

In a Feb. 22 response to the grievance, Markley ruled that Greenwood had not been discriminatory.

"While the composition of the program does not match the composition of the school," Markley wrote, "that in and of itself does not prove discrimination."

In the complaint, Edgerton also referenced parents' attempt to advertise in

Forest Hills Elementary Spanish immersion

Enrollment of minority children in a Spanish immersion program lagged far behind enrollment of white children.

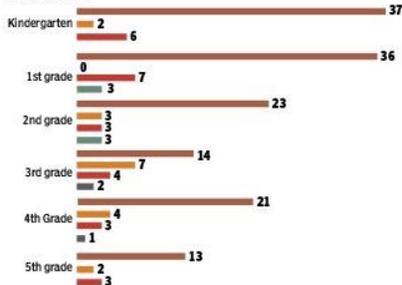
Forest Hills total



Immersion total



Breakdown



Source: New Hanover County Schools

GATEHOUSE MEDIA

underserved communities. He described a May 15, 2015, conversation with Greenwood, during which she said parents should not be conducting outreach in minority areas because of safety issues. She also said she'd heard a rumor black parents didn't want their children in immersion because of Spanish gangs.

"When she volunteered that information along with the other stuff," Edgerton said in a recent interview, "I was just kind of astounded."

Markley referenced Greenwood's comments in his response.

"When parents asked about going into specific neighborhoods," Markley wrote, "the principal did not agree to this approach because it was not their responsibility and she also expressed concerns for parent safety."

Greenwood, who has resigned effective the end of this school year, did not reply to repeated interview requests for this story — via phone, email and in person at the school. The principal has come under fire over the past year — about the immersion program, teacher grievances to New Hanover County Schools, parent concerns about overall school atmosphere and low numbers on a teacher working condition survey.

In the 2015 survey, only 3.7 percent of the staff responded yes to "Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them." And for "School leadership consistently supports teachers," only 14.8 percent agreed.

On May 10, Markley banned Edgerton from all New Hanover County Schools' property. Edgerton, a 2016 inductee into the N.C. Literary Hall of Fame, learned of the ban when he arrived at Forest Hills to work with one of two students he tutors regularly on a volunteer basis.

According to Markley's determination letter to Edgerton, a parent Edgerton called about the immersion program expressed concerns to the county office that he had acquired her information illegally.

"In the process of doing

what we believe is right in this matter," Edgerton subsequently wrote to his attorney, "a group of parents and other interested citizens started calling parents who we believed may have been on a wait list of students who came on time but were denied admission to Spanish Immersion. Phone numbers were gained at the expense of time and effort from word of mouth, asking questions, canvassing."

In addition to the ban, Markley requested that Edgerton "turn over all students records (including copies), other than those of your own children, that you may have in your possession along with a detailed report of how you obtained the records."

'A strange set of circumstances'

The difference between the Spanish immersion program and the rest of the school is most obvious each day from 10:40 a.m. to 1:05 p.m., when children sit down in the cafeteria for lunch, said Kristina Edgerton, a former president of the school's PTA and Clyde Edgerton's wife.

"You can look at a table and basically guess which are immersion and which are not," she said.

According to data provided by the school district

in February, the multi-grade program has 197 students. Of those, 73 percent are white, 13.2 percent are Hispanic, 9.1 percent are black, and 4.6 percent are other races. In the past two years, only two black children have been admitted. By comparison, the total student body at Forest Hills is 56 percent minority.

Most districts with immersion have extensive outreach programs to ensure diverse classrooms in an attempt to guarantee cultural exchanges, said Black, the University of South Carolina law professor. The situation in New Hanover County struck him as odd.

"It certainly seems," Black said, "like a strange set of circumstances that would raise the question of, 'Is there some discriminatory motive there?' But you can't prove that motive. It could just be poor planning."

Concerned discrimination could have played a part in the denial of their children's applications, a group of minority parents enlisted the aid of the UNC Center for Civil Rights.

"It is clear that the district's subjective outreach and enrollment policies have had a disproportionate and discriminatory impact on African American and Latino students in the district, and thereby (deprived) those students of equal educational opportunities," Center for Civil Rights attorneys Mark Dorosin and Elizabeth Haddix wrote in an April 11 letter to Wayne Bullard, New Hanover County Schools' general counsel.

In an April 14 response, Bullard disagreed with the center's claim, but agreed to offer the students they represented enrollment in the program at Gregory.

'I was discriminated against'

When Victoria, who requested her last name not be used, walked into an August 2012 meeting with Greenwood, she expected to hear that her rising first graders — twins, a boy and a girl — would be starting school in Forest Hills' immersion program two

SEE SCHOOLS A6



Words alone cannot express our gratitude for the love and support that has been shown since the finding of my Mother's illness in October, to even now, after her passing. For this we say "Thank you" to all and may God bless you all.

The family of the late
Joyce Jackson Johnson

weeks later.

Victoria had applied during the previous spring. She had called the school several times for a status update, but was told each time, "We don't know yet."

Both children spoke Spanish at home, and Victoria wanted them to learn the written language, too.

"They had numbers and letters in Spanish," she said, "and I thought for sure they'll take them."

Victoria's confidence was misplaced: The twins were not accepted. Greenwood, Victoria said, told her the program had already filled and there were no seats left for her children.

Greenwood also told Victoria that her son's speech impediment could be confusing and would make it difficult for him to participate.

More than three years later, she learned about the program's move to Gregory and started attending program meetings. The more she talked to other parents who had applied to Forest Hills, the more disturbed she became: White kids consistently made up the majority of the program. Despite those repeated phone calls, she had never received formal notification regarding her 2012 application. Therejection had come only in the form of that conversation with Greenwood, never in writing. And there was the discussion about her son's speech therapy.

"I think I was discriminated against, my kids were discriminated against for being Latino or having special needs," said Victoria, who is part of the group working with the UNC Center for Civil Rights.



Forest Hills Elementary School. The school's Spanish immersion program's admission policies resulted in participation overwhelmingly from white children. STARNEWS FILE PHOTO

The letter to UNC Center for Civil Rights from schools attorney Bullard gives her confidence her children will be the immersion program at Gregory this fall.

'This wasn't particularly fair'

Spanish immersion at Forest Hills was the brainchild of Michael Cobb, the school's former principal, who left following the 2011-12 school year.

When the first class was chosen in 2009, only Forest Hills students could apply and they were picked with a lottery.

"I wanted to maintain the same kind of ethnic and racial makeup that the rest of the school had," Cobb said.

The lottery continued one more year.

Cobb's first two classes were mostly white. The school's first class, now in fifth grade, has 13 white

students in an 18-student class, while there are 21 white fourth-graders in a 29-person grade.

During the third enrollment period, for the kindergarten class of 2012-13, the school admitted outside students for the first time because there wasn't enough interest within the school.

That year, the class was immersion's most diverse, with 14 white students and 13 minorities. Greenwood arrived at Forest Hills with those students.

She and other officials used press releases and news articles, including one in the StarNews, to promote a proposed Mandarin track during the 2013-14 school year, though no specific outreach to underserved communities took place. While the school did not receive the 20 applications it needed to start Mandarin, the promotion resulted in increased enrollment in

Spanish immersion.

During the selection process for the current first and second grades, Markley said, every student who wanted a spot in the program received one, even with the spike in interest following the efforts to launch Mandarin.

Then, for the 2015-16 kindergarten class, there were more interested children than spots available, and Greenwood chose to use the first come, first served method.

Lee was put off throughout the process, beginning with the December 2014 meeting and continuing until she received an acceptance letter for her son about a month before open kindergarten registration began.

His class ended up with 37 white students, six Hispanic students and two black students.

According to documents obtained by the StarNews, left on the wait

list for that class were 13 white, 11 black and three Hispanic students.

"I was concerned all the while this was happening," Lee said, "that this wasn't particularly fair."

'You try a different method'

At no point during the six-year history of the program at Forest Hills was there a written policy describing how enrollment should work. The school's principal typically controlled the process, Markley said.

After reviewing the program's history for Edgerton's grievance, Markley wrote, "The primary issue with enrollment in the Spanish Immersion Program is the inconsistent nature of the process. Each year, the process changed as the program changed, and these changes were not always communicated effectively."

"I wanted to maintain the same kind of ethnic and racial makeup that the rest of the school had."

— Michael Cobb, former principal

For the 2016-17 kindergarten class at Gregory, Markley wrote, the district's Central Office will be in charge of recruiting kindergarten students and running the lottery that chooses them.

Changes between last year and 2016-17, he added, were made because of increased interest in the program, which outgrew its original home at Forest Hills. Gregory will eventually become a full Spanish immersion magnet school, meaning it must use a lottery for admission, per district policy.

"You try one method, it doesn't necessarily get the diversity you want," Markley said, "so you try a different method."

So far, the different method is working. Gregory's first kindergarten class has 73 applicants, 37 percent of whom are white, 30 percent black, 22 percent Hispanic and 11 percent other races.

Parents who have been asking questions for so long are celebrating those results.

"I'm eager to support the program in the move to Gregory," Lee said, "and am happy that the incoming kindergarten class will be more diverse than my son's present class."

— Reporter Adam Wagner can be reached at 910-343-2389 or Adam.Wagner@StarNewsOnline.com.

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IN SUNDAY > 1D



StarNews

SUNDAY, October 20, 2013

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The fatal shooting of a moped rider on the streets of Forest Hills last month is thought to be gang-related. Crime-scene tape has become a familiar site in Wilmington's inner city, where a steady drumbeat of gunfire was heard this summer. *StarNews file photos*

In Creekwood, a mother who can no longer trust the world

By F.T. NORTON
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This month makes one year since Crystal Lee and her five children moved into a beautifully renovated duplex in the Creekwood neighborhood.

Lee is a concerned mother, one of 190 women who head households in the beleaguered 198-unit neighborhood managed by the Wilmington Housing Authority.

She doesn't allow her children to play outside, not because she doesn't trust them, but because she doesn't trust the world.

"They get mad at me like I'm trying to punish them, but I just want to keep them safe,"

Lee said Thursday.

Even though the playground is only steps from her front door, Lee doesn't let her children play there either. After what police called a gang-related shooting across from the playground Sept. 29, she feels justified.

"My neighbor came running to me because her son was out there. I was glad I didn't let my kids go there," she said. "I love my apartment, I'm grateful for it, but at the same time, I just have to be careful."

"But I feel like at the same time too you can't just judge it on being Creekwood. I mean it's not just Creekwood, it's everywhere."

See CREEKWOOD | 5A



Mothers in Creekwood wait for school buses that were kept out of the neighborhood during a massive search for a man who shot and wounded a New Hanover County sheriff's detective earlier this month. *Photo by Matt Born*

wilmington's

GANG WARS WHAT'S DRIVING THE VIOLENCE?



OFFICIALS SAY EVEN MINOR SLIGHTS SETTLED WITH GUNFIRE. 'IT'S OVER DRUGS, TERRITORY, WHATEVER. IT JUST BUILDS UP.'

By ADAM WAGNER
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Yellow crime scene tape, flashing blue lights and police combing the sidewalks for shell casings while unsettled residents look on are becoming as routine as children playing in the front yards of some neighborhoods.

Local police are chalking up much of the violence to another chapter in the nationwide gang battle between Bloods and Crips, but the reality is less clear. Much of the murkiness stems from the fact that while the violence has mostly been targeted, it's more often a side effect of perceived slights than organized criminal enterprise.

"It's more of a middle-school mentality where they get offended for whatever reason, whether it's over a girl or whether it's over drugs, territory, whatever. It just builds up," said Jonathan Poplin, a member of the Wilmington Police Department's housing and gang unit. "It'll

start as maybe a fistfight or maybe somebody shoots at somebody else, and it has snowballed to where we are now."

Where we are now is a city where the steady drumbeat of gunfire was as much the song of the summer as any top 40 hit, only reaching a crescendo in September after Joseph David Williams was shot in the back and killed while trying to flee a pursuing car.

That killing, which happened on Forest Hills Drive, inexorably tied one of the city's wealthiest neighborhoods to some of its poorest.

A few weeks later, New Hanover County Sheriff's Office Detective Michael Spencer was shot and wounded in Creekwood as he and his partner attempted to approach a suspicious individual, the result of what Sheriff Ed McMahon called "a blatant disregard for authority and for life."

Three days after Spencer was shot, Brandon Devone Smith, the

See GANGS | 4A

MORE INSIDE

Wilmington Police Chief Ralph Evangelous says he has two key gang members in jail, brothers Garry and Rashawn Hines. **4A**

Gunfire has people on edge. **5A**

Violence has spilled into normally quiet neighborhoods. **5A**



R. Hines



G. Hines

INSIDE >>



SOME SUN
74°/51°
FORECAST, 12B

Bridge..... **2F**
Puzzles..... **6F**
Comics..... **insert**

Deaths..... **4B**
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WILMINGTON'S GANG WARS | What's driving the violence?

GANGS

Continued from 1A

man accused of shooting the detective, was pursued into a sleepy Wrightsboro neighborhood made up of five dead-end streets before being killed by law enforcement officers in a wooded area.

Linda Rawley, a police spokeswoman, said the department doesn't have readily available gang-related crime statistics because gang-related crimes aren't catalogued separately when they're entered into computers.

Anecdotally, though, Rawley and other law enforcement officials have said the surge in violence since June is being perpetrated by New Hanover County's 323 validated gang members and their counterparts.

Gangs with names such as Double ii, Westside Rolling 60 Crips, the 1090 Boyz, Billys and 720 Gangster Disciples, among others, are responsible for Wilmington's recent violence, said Poplin, who's called "the gang guy" by other officers.

Making the situation more difficult for law enforcement, Poplin added, are constantly shifting memberships and frequent name changes of groups.

The violence stemming from gang conflicts has led to law enforcement and political leaders taking steps to make sure residents feel secure.

"Wilmington is a safe community and this county and this region is a safe region. It always has been," said Woody White, chairman of the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners, at a news conference Monday. "But recent circumstances have called into question whether that's still the situation."

At the same news conference, at which it was announced that 32 police officers and 32 sheriff's deputies who normally work in non-uniform roles would be working patrol shifts, Wilmington Mayor Bill Saffo said the city and county are battling a severe criminal element.

"They have a total disregard for the law. They have a total disregard for themselves and for the entire community," Saffo said. "When we have people shooting each other in the middle of the day or shooting people's homes or at somebody's house with a little child in there, we've got to band together and work together."

What led us here

The causes of some of the recent violence became slightly clearer Monday.

"Within (the Bloods and the Crips), certain sects are battling over women, drugs and territory," Police Chief Ralph Evangelous said. "They also launched an effort to retaliate against witnesses in one of our gang-related cases."

The retaliation effort was based on a witness list given to a defendant during the discovery period of a trial, Evangelous said. The defendant then put the list on the street and it was used to retaliate against the witnesses.

Police have remained tight-lipped about the trial and the witnesses who may have been intimidated, saying only that they believe it may have led to some of the back-and-forth violence.

Traditionally, gang presences in Wilmington have included what Poplin called "a big old golf umbrella" of sects of Bloods and a "little old lady, keep it in the Crown Vic umbrella" of Crips.

Thus, much of the violence has been Bloods battling other Bloods, he said.

A void created when Blood lead-



A New Hanover County sheriff's deputy patrols in Creekwood after a detective was shot during a traffic stop. Law enforcement officials say gangs, with names such as Double ii, Westside Rolling 60 Crips, the 1090 Boyz, Billys and 720 Gangster Disciples, among others, are responsible for Wilmington's recent violence. StarNews file photo

"They have a total disregard for the law. They have a total disregard for themselves and for the entire community. When we have people shooting each other in the middle of the day or shooting people's homes or at somebody's house with a little child in there, we've got to band together and work together."

BILL SAFFO, WILMINGTON MAYOR

ers were arrested, though, has left the door open for Crips and Folk Nation, a Crip-aligned sect, to become more involved in the action, Poplin said.

Crips, typically, live in Creekwold, while Bloods usually live in Houston Moore, Rawley said. That doesn't mean a Blood won't spend time in Creekwold or a Crip won't spend time in Houston Moore, though, because of things like relationships and family ties.

Who are the gangsters?

The people involved in gang violence are typically males - some as young as 13 or 14, and others as old as their mid- to late 20s, Poplin said.

"There comes a point in their late 20s when either they're locked up, they're dead or they realize one of those is gonna happen if they continue, and most of them will get out of the game," he said.

Another reason some decide to leave their gang years behind is what police say is a steady esca-

lation in the willingness of young people to commit violent crimes.

"We'll get out with people who four, five years ago we interacted with frequently in that gang capacity and we get out with them now and talk with them and they'll be like, 'Dude, these kids are crazy. It's not worth it, I've got kids, I'm doing what I can for my family,'" Poplin said. "And they have a good point. The kids that are doing it now, they are crazy - they don't care who they shoot."

There are a multitude of reasons young people get wrapped up in gang life, said Kristy Williams, a youth violence intervention specialist and the program director for the Elements Youth Violence Intervention Program.

Elements, which operates under the New Hanover County Sheriff's Office but is not a law enforcement organization, is a program designed to identify and help at-risk children ages 9 to 13.

Williams spoke to one man who had entered the program as an at-risk kid and used it to turn his life

around.

"He was very easy at this point in his life to be able to say, 'I didn't feel like I had a family, I didn't feel like I cared about me,'" Williams said. "He had a mom and a dad in the home, but he didn't feel like they cared about them, so he went and sought out another family."

Other reasons Williams and Craig Kelly, another intervention specialist, have heard for gang involvement are the presence of a father or big brother figure, the thrill of it and a sense of protection if they're being bullied.

Validation

If young men become too involved in gang activity, they could end up in a statewide database of validated gang members.

To become validated, a gang member must fulfill two of 12 criteria on a checklist. Included on the checklist are indicators such as admitting to being a gang member, having tattoos or markings, frequenting gang areas, affiliating with gang members and displaying gang hand signs or writing graffiti.

Validating gang members is a time-consuming process, with officers compiling a file on each person, including supporting materials such as photos, videos, field interviews and criminal histories.

Those files are routinely at least an inch thick, Poplin said.

Officers are careful about who they choose to classify as a gang member, in part because of the amount of work that goes into it but also because of the effect being wrong can have on their credibility.

"If you validate someone that's not a gang member, you lose the faith of the community," Poplin said. "Say we validate your son. You know he's not a gang member, so you're gonna say they're a bunch of fools, they don't know what they're doing. So you lose that trust."

Poplin added that labeling someone a gang member in front of a judge without sufficient evidence could damage the judge's opinion of the officer.

For that reason, Wilmington Police Department officers often locate at least a third piece of evidence that a person is active in gang activity.

Poplin said the investigation used to validate gang members can often help police develop a better understanding of someone's associates or activities.

Keeping the files updated - which must happen every five years - will be one of the responsibilities of the Wilmington Police Department's new gang investigative unit, Poplin said. The city council approved the formation of the unit, which will consist of four officers, a sergeant and an intelligence analyst, during Tuesday's regular meeting.

Law enforcement challenges

Officials have taken a multitude of steps to solve the area's criminal problems, with WPD's gang investigative unit being one of four new efforts within the past year, three of which have been announced or approved in the past week.

In addition to the gang unit, there is the 64-person WPD and New Hanover County Sheriff's Office task force and the seven deputies added to WPD's housing unit.

After the city council approved the gang unit Tuesday, Evangelous said, "I think that we're tooled up. Now we've gotta produce. Now we've gotta show what we can do."

Even though they have all the tools they've asked for, police still have to face challenges, not

the least of which are an ongoing manpower shortage and convincing people who see crimes happening to say something.

The police department has had a 30-officer shortage for several months, as officers routinely leave the department to take higher-paying jobs elsewhere. As of Monday, the department was back to full staffing, but most of the newly hired officers hadn't passed field training school or been approved for road duty yet.

"It takes us a year, sometimes over a year, to recruit, hire, train and get someone through field training. Then they're not very effective for another year or two years, sometimes," Evangelous said.

To partially combat the problem, the city council on Tuesday signed off on the department adding 10 "over-hire" officers to help anticipate members leaving the force and minimize their impact.

Evangelous used a presentation in front of the council to, in part, make the case for increasing pay.

"Why hire people if they're gonna leave?" the chief said. "If we continue to have the issue of vacancies occurring, we need to keep our people. Our good people leave. Our people will make more money in other locations. Let's pay them competitively, let's pay them fairly."

The manpower shortage also takes a toll on the department's officers, with many of their working overtime shifts or having their schedules shifted to provide the maximum possible coverage.

"They're tired - they're tired, they're really are. And a lot of them are being forced to work overtime, and you can do that short term, but you can't do it long term," Evangelous said. "It's a stressful job to begin with, and now with the violence that we're seeing out there, it's even more stressful for them."

Poplin, the housing officer, said, "This summer there were a couple months where we didn't even make it to the office. As soon as we checked on the radio, we were on our way to some kind of fiasco."

Law enforcement officials are hopeful that increasing the number of police in uniform on city streets will help decrease the number of events and also help increase the amount of trust the public has for law enforcement.

Part of that, Sheriff McMahon said, is getting past the idea that talking to police is "snitching."

"You need to realize that we're not talking about snitching that somebody took a cookie or somebody cheated on a test or somebody did something," he said. "We're talking about taking people's lives. We're talking about serious violent crimes."

It's difficult for police to develop intelligence on gangs because of their family-type nature. For that reason, it's especially difficult for an undercover officer to infiltrate a gang. Also, law enforcement is dependent on the community's help.

"These guys are close-knit as a community. They've grown up with everybody in their group," Poplin said.

He added that people are encouraged to talk to law enforcement officials if police have already built a type of personal rapport with them or if they become "fed up" with the activity taking place around them.

"It has taken a lot of bad stuff to get that far, but I believe we're finally getting to that (fed-up) point," Poplin said, "and either way the issue we have is that mentality of don't talk to the police. We have to break that."

Adam Wagner: 343-2096
On Twitter: @adamwagner1990

Chief: Power vacuum spurred violence

BY ADAM WAGNER
Adam.Wagner@StarNewsOnline.com

Police officers involved in gang investigations pointed to the arrest of some gang leaders as creating a power vacuum and leading to turf wars in Wilmington.

Last week, the extent of that vacuum became clear when Wilmington Police Chief Ralph Evangelous twice said there are 125 validated gang members in the New Hanover County jail.

"Because of such a great job our guys were doing when we've taken down some leadership positions within these gangs, what has occurred is ... a free-for-all out there going on where ... one

side will retaliate against another or their associates," Evangelous said.

While law enforcement officials have repeatedly refused to identify the gang leaders who may have created the vacuum, Evangelous hinted at the identities of some of them Monday.

When asked if the arrests of the Hines brothers, one of whom Evangelous had labeled "one of Wilmington's worst offenders" this summer, had contributed to the power vacuum, the chief paused for several beats before saying, "There's a strong likelihood."

The older brother, Garry Orlando Hines, 20, is charged with murder in the May 2011

shooting death of Cornelius Blanks, 23, outside Club 609 on Market Street. A trial is set for Dec. 2.

While Hines was out on bond on Sept. 4, he was arrested and charged with 11 counts of selling and delivering heroin. He is in the New Hanover County jail with bail set at \$1 million.

Younger brother Rashawn Hines, 19, who was called "one of Wilmington's worst offenders," is in Foothills Correctional Institute with bail set at \$500,000. Rashawn Hines' projected release date is Sept. 19, 2014, but his next custody review is set for April 1, 2014.

A judge revoked Rashawn Hines' probation on drug

possession charges after he pleaded guilty to resisting arrest in connection with the shooting death of Jeffrey Henry, 17, in July.

Wilmington police Detective Kevin Tully said in court he considered Rashawn Hines a "suspect" in the Henry killing.

The Hines brothers are two of nine siblings. They have another brother, Al'Quon Flowers, 18, who went missing in July 2011. Some speculate Flowers' disappearance was in retaliation for the Blanks killing. Flowers has never been located.

Adam Wagner: 343-2096
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SHOTS, INJURIES UP OVER LAST YEAR

SHOTS FIRED REPORTED JAN. 1-OCT. 1, 2012: 501
SHOTS FIRED REPORTED JAN. 1-OCT. 1, 2013: 686
Increase: 37 percent

INJURED BY GUNFIRE JAN. 1-OCT. 1, 2012: 62
INJURED BY GUNFIRE JAN. 1-OCT. 1, 2013: 74
Increase: 19 percent
Source: Wilmington Police Department

WHAT'S BEING DONE

5-MEMBER GANG INVESTIGATIVE UNIT: Members, including a sergeant, will conduct long-term surveillance projects of the area's gangs. Will be operational in four to six weeks.

14-MAN PATROL IN PUBLIC HOUSING: Adding six New Hanover County Sheriff's Office deputies and one sergeant to the six Wilmington Police Department officers and sergeant already patrolling housing areas.

64-MAN PATROL FORCE: 32 non-uniform WPD officers and 32 non-uniform sheriff's deputies will be used to provide expanded patrols.

12-OFFICER MOBILE FIELD FORCE: The unit, including a six-person surveillance team, began on May 28. It has netted 52 felony arrests, 167 misdemeanor arrests and 53 citations.
Source: Wilmington Police Department



EASIER TO GET | DEADLY AS EVER

A 3-day special report

HEROIN

'KATHERINE,' 40, IS A HEROIN ADDICT

She'll shiver and sweat, deal with diarrhea and vomiting, lie in bed with aches and experience cravings that make hours feel like days.

'It won't stop,' she said. 'You're begging yourself for peace. Once you get that shot, all is well in your body.'



Four to six times a day, 'Katherine' shoots an opiate into her bloodstream. She knows that she has to stop using heroin. It is killing her slowly every day. Photo by Mike Spencer

She knows it's killing her. She can't quit

By MIKE VOORHEIS
Mike.Voorheis@StarNewsOnline.com

Seated backward on a toilet, "Katherine" puffs out her cheeks and holds her breath. Her partner ticks the needle with her finger and presses it at a 90-degree angle into a vein in Katherine's neck. The vein is the most direct route to the brain, and Katherine needs the heroin to get there as fast as it can.

She doesn't have the stomach to inject herself, so she needs her partner to handle the needle.

Up to six times a day, Katherine

shoots an opiate into her bloodstream. Katherine feels the euphoria - "It's like every happy cell in your body goes off at once."

Primarily, though, her use of heroin and other opiates is for maintenance. It prevents the aches, the jitters, the diarrhea that come from withdrawal.

Katherine, 40, refers to it as "getting well."

She drives from her Brunswick County home a half hour into Wilmington once or twice a day to buy the opiates for herself and her partner. If she purchases heroin, she'll drive out of the dealer's neighborhood, stop in

the parking lot of a gas station or fast food restaurant and get her fix before driving home. If she buys pills, she'll have to drive home to crush them.

Katherine tries to use the same two or three dealers on a regular basis. After paying full price for fake heroin that consisted of nothing but sugars and powders, she learned to be loyal to a few select dealers. Heroin shopping is like any retail market - quality comes at a price. Katherine can get more heroin for a lower price, but she knows that the higher-priced drugs will have longer-lasting effects.

See **ADDICT** | 5A



After prescription drug crackdown, cheap and plentiful heroin fills a void

By ADAM WAGNER
Adam.Wagner@StarNewsOnline.com

In September 2012, the then-captain of the New Hanover County Sheriff's Office's Vice and Narcotics Unit predicted that efforts to curb prescription drug use could be a "double-edged sword" causing users to seek out heroin instead.

Now, 18 months later, that prognosis looks spot-on as the streets of Wilmington and highways of Brunswick County are awash with heroin, a drug Ben and Jon David, the district attorneys for New Hanover and Brunswick counties, respectively, both call "suicide on the installment plan."

Within the city limits, the Wilmington Police Department arrested 12 people carrying heroin in 2003, a number that steadily ticked upward until it reached 214 in 2013.

In Brunswick County, sheriff's office records show more heroin was seized in 2013 than in the past 15 years combined. The value of heroin seized in New Hanover County in 2012, the last year for which records are available, was \$2.16 million, nearly double the value of any other drug.

"The heroin problem in Brunswick County is the biggest we've seen in my tenure with the sheriff's office since 2000," said Lt. Steve Lanier, who oversees the Brunswick County Sheriff's Office's Vice and Narcotics Unit.

See **HEROIN** | 4A

12

People arrested for heroin possession in Wilmington in 2003

214

People arrested for heroin possession in Wilmington in 2013

COMING MONDAY

- The road to heroin through the eyes of users.
- Treatment for a disease with no cure.
- Heroin overdoses soar in North Carolina.

Several officials and experts said the rise in heroin use could be the unintended consequence of efforts to curb use of prescription drugs such as hydrocodone and oxycodone. Among those efforts are a statewide reporting system designed to help identify abusers, doctors' monitoring of their patients with drug screens before prescribing and random pill counts during the course of treatment.

Lanier likened the rise in prescription drugs to a flood that has dried up because of law enforcement and medical efforts.

"Once the flood waters subside, the dam's put back in place, there's all this need for pills and now no pills or the pills are a lot harder to come by," Lanier said. "Then people start looking for other avenues, which leads right to the illicit use of heroin."

The shift from pain medication to heroin is nothing new. Users swapping use of prescription opioids for use of heroin was listed as a possible cause for an increase in overdose deaths nationally in the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's 2013 National Drug Threat Assessment Summary.

Among the reasons given for users transitioning between prescribed opioids and street-level drugs was the cost and the ease with which heroin could be bought while providing a similar high.

In Brunswick, a small baggy – or bindle – of heroin sells for as little as \$6 and averages about \$10, while one oxycodone pill is worth about \$20, said Chris Thomas of the Brunswick County District Attorney's Office. Each bindle contains one-tenth of a gram of heroin – a typical dose for a new user.

"It's gotten so hard to get pills that people are turning to the easiest opiate to get," Thomas said.

That \$10-a-bag asking price "is a kind of significant price that reminds me of when crack cocaine became very famous and very popular," said Dr. Paolo Mannelli, an addiction expert and associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Duke University.

What use looks like

There is no "typical" heroin user.

"We've seen everything from teenagers to 80-year-olds. It doesn't see race, color, creed, it doesn't see a money amount, it doesn't see a poverty level. It doesn't see any of that," Lanier said.

In the Cape Fear region, powder heroin is the norm. Generally more potent than its cousin, black tar heroin, powder heroin originates from Afghanistan. Tar heroin is generally from Central America.

"What makes the powder heroin more dangerous than the tar heroin is it can be ingested so many different ways ... and apparently there's not a stigma attached to heroin for children, teenagers or young folks in college," Thomas said.

Among the ways powder heroin can be ingested are smoking, snorting, eating it and putting it in Visine bottles before dropping the dissolved drug into the eyes. In the 1990s, when heroin was last the dominant street drug, it fell out of favor for several reasons. A major factor was that it was usually only about 5 percent pure and had to be injected for a user to get high.

"But nobody wanted to use the IV because of HIV, so when they started using nasally it wasn't strong enough," Mannelli said.

Now, two decades later, the heroin has jumped in purity to at least 10 percent, often reaching 20 percent to 25 percent, Mannelli added, and the increased potency of the drug could be one of the primary causes of a jump in overdose deaths.

Local law enforcement agencies do not check for purity, instead sending samples of seized substances to the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation's State Crime Lab to determine simply whether it tests positive for heroin.

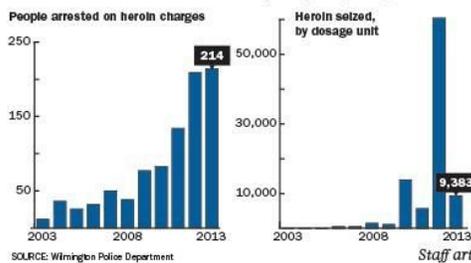
The lab also tests to see what the heroin has been "cut" or mixed with. Among common "cuts" in Brunswick and New Hanover counties are mannitol, lactose, caffeine and benzocaine, said Noelle Talley, an SBI spokeswoman.



Keith and Rachel Thompson look through newspaper clippings on drug-related deaths. Their daughter, Blaire, died of a cocaine overdose in a Market Street motel on Dec. 23, 2004. She had overdosed on heroin earlier in the day before her companions gave her a lethal dose of cocaine in an attempt to wake her up. Photo by Matt Born

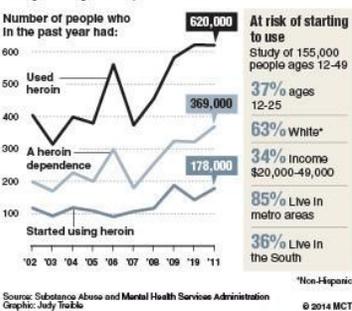
HEROIN ARRESTS AND SEIZURES

Heroin-related arrests have been trending higher in Wilmington. While the amount of heroin seized has also increased, it varies more year to year depending on busts.



HEROIN USE IN THE U.S.

Heroin use is growing as the addictive drug becomes cheaper and easier to buy all over the country. A look at the trend in use among those ages 12-49, in thousands.



Finding heroin in Brunswick and New Hanover counties is particularly easy at the moment, said both officials and addicts.

Thomas said Brunswick County investigators have interviewed people who have purchased 250 bindles of heroin at the street level without even knowing the name of their suppliers.

Often, these bindles are stamped with cartoonish logos or brands so that addicts know what product they want.

Dealers using those logos often put out uncut, more potent heroin for a couple weeks to draw addicts in, Thomas said. Then they'll cut it with different substances, leading the users to switch "brands" after a little while.

Why is it in Wilmington?

During January's Wilmington City Council meeting, Wilmington Police Chief Ralph Evangelous said crime throughout the city was down, but "obviously we've got issues with the drug trade, the heroin trade out there that's driving some of this violent crime."

Evangelous presented a map showing overlap in 2013 between drug busts, violence and public housing communities – targeted in the past year by special enforcement efforts.

While much of the violence does

Often, Wilmington's heroin – which also makes its way to Brunswick County – is distributed by Bloods gangs and some Crips who are active in New York and New Jersey.

Law enforcement's role

While law enforcement agencies in the Cape Fear region saw the possibility for a boom in heroin when the strict prescription pill laws went into effect, it was hard to predict how severe it would spike.

Technology can also make the battle against drugs more difficult, as dealers no longer have to sell from a static location. "Everybody has a cellphone, so rather than dealing with people on the street, you'll call your dealer and it'll be, 'Meet me at this parking lot or that parking lot,' and that'll be throughout the city," said Capt. Jeff Allsbrook, who oversees WPD's Vice and Narcotics Unit.

To battle the drug trade, law enforcement has to turn to some tried-and-true methods such as confidential informants, tips from community members or talking to addicts themselves.

"They can tell us who's got the strongest bags or whose bags aren't really good," Lanier said. "Some of them can tell you if a bag came from New York, New Jersey, Atlanta from the type of dope it is and the high they get."

Still, even with informants, battling the drug trade can prove frustrating for law enforcement. Lanier compared arresting a dealer to dipping your finger in a bucket of water and then pulling your finger out to see if it had left a hole.

In other words, arresting a dealer may create a temporary void, but there is enough demand – and enough heroin to fill that demand – that the gap is filled almost instantaneously.

"It's a sheer numbers game," Lanier said. "When you look at the thousands of people using, selling or somehow involved with heroin and there's a small group of us that are trying to combat that, we have to go at it as hard as we can and as fast as we can, but we're not gonna be able to get everybody."

Narcotics detectives do have some tricks, though. Thomas, the assistant district attorney in Brunswick County, told of going on a ride-along once with a narcotics detective and being told the person

they were trailing had cigarette filters in his car.

When he asked why that mattered, Thomas was told that addicts will suck the heroin through the cigarette filter with a syringe and then, when they're having a bad day or can't find their dealer, they'll gather the filters, heat them up and get enough residue to tide them over.

Officers can make an arrest "just by asking somebody for their driver's license and having the street knowledge to know what those little pieces of cigarette filters signify," Thomas said.

What's next?

Even though the Cape Fear region is struggling with heroin, use of the drug might not yet have peaked, as addicts continue to find their access to painkillers limited.

"My sense is that we will see a kind of incredible increase of users," Mannelli said. "It will be a big, big rise of users and, of course, the competition isn't about using either heroin or pain medication. They're using both."

Battling heroin use in the near future will require an investment in treatment, education and some elements of enforcement, agree both officials and families who have been touched by the drug.

Heroin users are taking their first hits at a younger age, according to the 2013 National Drug Threat Assessment. In 2011, the average age of first use among heroin users was 22.1 years old and in 2010 it was 21.4 years old, whereas it was 25.5 in 2009.

The drop among the average age of the users is a consequence, Mannelli said, of the \$10-a-bindle price.

"Being available for cheaper means young people can use it freely," the Duke professor said.

The 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that psychotherapeutic drugs such as prescription opioids are the second most common drug among people ages 12 to 17, with 2.8 percent of young people describing themselves as users.

While that number has seen a slight decline, falling from a high of about 4 percent in 2003, officials still expressed concern.

"That's terrifying," Ben David said. "You start projecting those numbers out, I can tell you what's gonna be huge for them in college in 10 years: It'll be heroin."

A rise in North Carolina's population – from 8.05 million people in 2000 to an estimated 9.85 million in 2013, according to the U.S. Census Bureau – has also caused officials to wonder whether the state might need more prisons.

The other area where investment seems necessary is treatment, as the number of people seeking help for heroin addiction rises.

In 2000, for instance, heroin was a factor in 131 admissions to treatment in the Wilmington Metropolitan Area, according to data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive. That number had risen to 299 people by 2010, the last year for which data was available.

"What we need to do right now is take a look at the next 20 years and say, 'Where are we really as a state on this issue?' Maybe it is time to do some infrastructure investment, definitely on drug treatment, maybe in prisons, too," Ben David said.

Keith Thompson's daughter, Blaire, died of a cocaine overdose in a Market Street motel on Dec. 23, 2004. She had overdosed on heroin earlier in the day before her companions gave her a lethal dose of cocaine in an attempt to wake her up.

Fighting heroin, Thompson said, requires a three-pronged approach based on strict enforcement of the state's drug laws, educating both parents and kids and allowing addicts to have accessible and affordable care.

"It takes all three of those happening simultaneously to put a dent in it," he said.

"If you take any of them out of the picture, it's just not gonna happen."



LOCAL • A3

Antique automobile show



SPORTS • B1

UNCW survives scare to reach CAA final



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TODAY MON TUE
 61°/38° 67°/45° 75°/51°
 Complete forecast, B10

LOCAL



Political signs dot the landscape

In hues of red, white and blue — and a few other colors — political signs have appeared on road signs and lawns ahead of the March 15 primary. **A2**

NATION



Legal marijuana cuts into profits of drug cartels

Legal marijuana may be doing at least one thing that a decades-long drug war couldn't: taking a bite out of Mexican drug cartels' profits. **A26**

LIFE

Cure spring fever with getaways

It's the time of year when spring bulbs aren't the only ones ready to burst forth. **C1**

BUSINESS

2 projects start filming

After several months of all quiet on the film front, local film crew members will dust off their cameras Monday for the start of production on TNT's drama series "Good Behavior." History's military drama series "Six" begins production Thursday. **D1**

Business ... D1-6 Obituaries...A44
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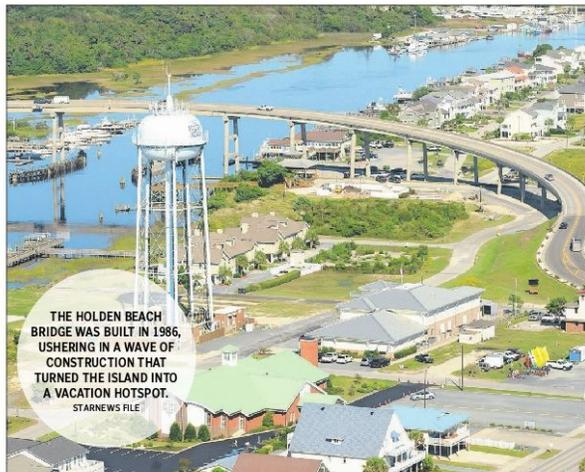
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Volume 149, Issue 144



BRUNSWICK BOOM: ABOUT THIS SERIES

Brunswick County is one of the fastest growing counties in one of the country's fastest growing states. Throughout the year, this occasional series will look how this rapid growth is changing life in the county and affecting the lives of its residents.



THE HOLDEN BEACH BRIDGE WAS BUILT IN 1986, USHERING IN A WAVE OF CONSTRUCTION THAT TURNED THE ISLAND INTO A VACATION HOTSPOT. STARNEWS FILE

County of change

Growth is generally accepted as a good thing, but how has it altered Brunswick County?

By Adam Wagner | StarNews Staff

The first time Ouida Hewett went to Holden Beach from her childhood home in Supply, she went by mule cart and didn't pass more than 10 houses on Holden Beach Road.

"We went across the waterway in low water," she said, "and we went to the beach, and my dad was fishing there."

At that time, in the 1930s, Holden Beach had no buildings other than fish shacks, Hewett said. A few homes were built after World War II, up to "20-some" when Hurricane Hazel passed through in 1954 to devastate them and much of the rest of the Brunswick County coast.

1954 also featured the opening of the first bridge to Holden Beach, a turntable bridge. In 1986, a new high-rise bridge replaced that structure, and the areas now a vacation hot spot.

Holden Beach's growth is similar to the rest of Brunswick County's. For much of the 20th Century, several natives said, "rural" was the most apt term for the area. The roads were predominantly dirt, the neighbors

Population

2016: 124,668
 2011: 110,312
 2006: 93,756
 1991: 52,823
 1976: 34,500
 — Census

Population 65 and over

2016: 29,710
 2006: 18,125
 1991: 7,802
 1976: 3,473
 — via NC OSBM

Median age

2014: 49.2 (estimate)
 2010: 47.4
 2000: 42.2
 1990: 37.2
 1980: 30.5
 1970: 26.4
 — Census

SEE BOOM, A5

GOP CAMPAIGN

Cruz picks up wins

By Nancy Benac and Roxana Hegeman
 The Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. — Ted Cruz claimed an easy victory in Kansas, and Republicans said he won Maine in Saturday's four-state round of Republican voting, fresh evidence that there's no quick end in sight to the fractious GOP race for president.

Kansas Democrats gave Bernie Sanders a win, as voters in three states chose between the Vermont senator and Hillary Clinton.

"God bless Kansas," Cruz declared during a rally in Idaho, which votes in three

SEE GOP, A7

NEW HANOVER COUNTY

Attacks mark race for county board

March 15 vote to narrow GOP field from 7 to 3 candidates

By Hunter Ingram
 StarNews Staff

NEW HANOVER COUNTY - The race for a seat on the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners will be whittled down to three GOP candidates when voters take to the polls March 15.

Seven Republicans are vying for three spots in the general election in November, running opposite Democratic candidates Jonathan Barfield, who currently sits on the board; Julia Boseman, who is a former county commissioner; and Nelson Beaulieu.

On the GOP primary ballot will be board chairwoman Beth Dawson, Derrick Hickey, John Babb and Campbell Dodd. Commissioner Woody White,

SEE BOARD, A15

More inside

Learn more about the seven Republican candidates running for the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners and see where they stand on the issues. **A14-15**

BOOM
From Page A1

homes and people than ever before, bringing both boons — such as a larger tax base and the critical mass to bring larger attractions — and headaches, including clogged transportation arteries and flooding.

“Living expenses and climate are the major reasons,” Bill Sue, a longtime county commissioner, said of the growth. “People retire, they’re on fixed income and they’re going to keep on coming. But the question is, are you going to keep the infrastructure to support them?”

The natives

When Sue was born in Leland in 1934, his father used a heifer cow to pay the doctor who delivered him.

For much of Sue’s boyhood, the only road that was paved was U.S. 74-76, a route now known as Old Village Road. The family didn’t even have a car until 1948, Sue said, and that one was ruined soon after because his father didn’t know to put antifreeze in it during the winter.

After bouncing around the country for much of the middle part of the century, Sue returned to the area in 1969, initially moving to Wilmington.

“People told me not to move to Brunswick County because the schools weren’t any good,” he said, waving to the land around his house on Sue Circle and adding, “Well, I’d already purchased this piece of property.”

Soon after returning to Southeastern North Carolina, Sue cleared the land off of Village Road, creating a drainage ditch by detonating dynamite.

When Sue finished building his house in 1970, it was one of 11,729 housing units in the county, according to state statistics. By 2010, the county had 77,482 total housing units.

Explaining why he chose to return to Brunswick at the time, Sue said, “This is home.”

Another person born in Brunswick who came back after a stint away is Kelly Holden, who operates Holden Brothers Farm Market in Shallotte. Holden graduated from Shallotte High School in 1968, one member of, coincidentally enough, a class of 68 people.

“It was just rural,” Holden said of the county. “That’s the best way to describe it.”

In 1974, after some time in the U.S. Navy, Holden returned to his family’s 400-acre farming operation. Shortly after, his father had a heart attack and Holden took charge, phasing out tobacco — once one of Brunswick’s most common crops.

Instead of tobacco, Holden and his brother began to grow vegetables, opening their farmers market at 5600 Ocean Highway West.

“We’ve been able to take advantage of that,” Holden said. “There’s plenty of farmers looking for an alternative, but with us, the location, just up the road we’ve got Ocean Ridge and we’ve got scores of subdivisions everywhere.”

Holden and Sue are a pair of the 1,321 people who moved into their Brunswick County homes between 1970 and 1979, according to Census data. An additional 925 people moved into their homes in 1969 or earlier, meaning only 4.7 percent of Brunswick County residents moved into their homes before 1980.

Of the county’s 47,600 householders, 34,021 have moved into their units since 2000, a total of 61.5 percent.

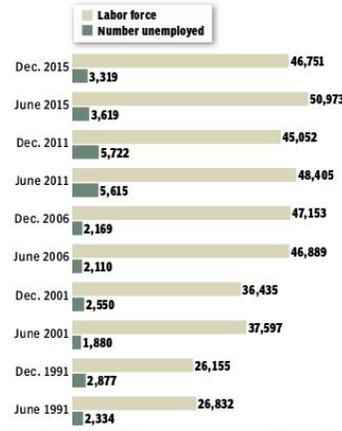
“I’m an endangered species in Brunswick County,” Sue said. “I’m a native.”

Holden watched long-time residents and



Kelly Holden, co-owner of Holden Brothers Farm Market, cultivates a field for spring planting on the farm in Shallotte. The farm has been in the family since 1756. MATT BORN/STARNEWS

STARNEWS



Source: NC Department of Commerce

GATEHOUSE MEDIA

newcomers clash while he served on the county’s board of commissioners from 1988 to 1992. The locals, he said, thought they were already operating under strict ordinances, while the county’s newer residents wanted to see tighter restrictions.

While Holden believes many of those tensions have eased, he said, “It’s a different season now than it was when I was growing up.”

The newcomers

Bob Patey and Gary Ostby are emblematic of one type of newcomer: The residents of the north who came to Brunswick County in an attempt to get away from cold temperatures and high taxes.

“There’s only three choices,” Patey said. “There’s Wilmington, there’s Charleston and then there’s Savannah, because not everybody wants to go to the elephant graveyard known as Florida.”

Ostby, who moved to Brunswick Forest from Michigan in 2013, echoed Patey’s sentiment.

“We’ve got the beach, we’ve got the mild climate,” Ostby said. “We didn’t want to go to Florida because of the summer, and we didn’t want to go to Florida because we know how much of their population is aging and really shouldn’t be on the road.”

Brunswick county’s population 65 and over has climbed by more than 11,000 people in the past 10 years, up to nearly 30,000 people, according to state data.

Still, the county’s total population over that same period has grown by about 31,000 people — it’s up to nearly 125,000 people from

about 94,000 in 2006. That means about 20,000 new residents are not senior citizens.

Chris Britt and his family make up four of those 20,000 people. Britt and his wife moved to Waterford from Wilmington in April 2006.

“Part of the reason we moved out there was for the land,” he said. “At the time, it was real estate at its peak, and when we started looking in Wilmington versus Leland, we could buy more house in Leland for the land that we wanted.”

When the couple moved, though, they found that many of the offerings they were used to in Wilmington weren’t yet available across the Cape Fear River.

“In 2006, there was no Wal-Mart, no Harris Teeter, there was nothing,” Britt said. “There were no restaurants. I remember the first restaurant that popped up was Arby’s.”

At one point, after the couple had two young daughters, they looked at how the neighborhood was developing around them — namely at the number of retirees moving into the area — and decided it might be better to return to Wilmington, even going as far as listing their house.

Still, the move didn’t work out, and now the neighborhood has shifted around them.

“As the area grows, there’s tons of families now,” Britt said, adding that a normal weekend consists of hanging out in the backyard with their neighbors who also have kids.

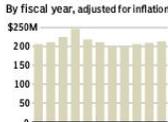
In other Brunswick County neighborhoods, the older nature is celebrated. The Brunswick County Newcomers Club,



Kelly Holden, co-owner of Holden Brothers Farm Market, gets in a tractor on Tuesday while working on the farm in Shallotte. MATT BORN/STARNEWS

By the numbers

Brunswick County budget



Source: Brunswick County

GATEHOUSE MEDIA

Brunswick County housing units



Sources: NC OSBM

GATEHOUSE MEDIA

for which Patey serves as second vice president, has about 450 members, with strong contingents from states such as Connecticut, New Jersey and New York.

“It’s a lot like your freshman year in college all over again,” Patey said. “You’re meeting people who are all in the same situation and quite honestly you’re looking for things to do and people to meet.”

Growing pains

Brunswick’s newest residents have, at times, left the county struggling to cope with all of their demands.

Perhaps the most obvious way this plays out is the traffic situation on U.S. 17-74-76 every morning and evening.

Since 2003, according to N.C. Department of Transportation data, U.S. 17-74-76 west of Village Road has added more than 20,000 cars per day. In 2003, the area recorded 42,000 trips, a number that reached 66,000 by 2007 and has basically stayed there.

Britt and his family drive on the Causeway every morning and evening.

“We leave early enough in the morning where it doesn’t bother us, but coming home at 5:30, it’s a pain,” Britt said.

Ongoing construction

on U.S. 74-76, expected to wrap up late in 2016, is meant to clear some of the road’s choke points, while the completion of the I-140 Wilmington Bypass is still expected to be completed in late 2017.

The construction that many want to see, though — a new crossing of the Cape Fear River — has not been funded. The project is estimated to cost between \$950 million and \$1 billion.

A draft environmental document for the crossing is projected to be completed in spring of 2017, with a final document being completed in summer of 2018.

Even after the DOT picks a route for the potential crossing, though, the project has not been funded, and the DOT project it will take at least five years to complete the new bridge.

Sue, the long-time commissioner, questions whether the coastal county will ever have the political sway to push the project through. He points to statistics that project the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge will have more than 70,000 cars, even when I-140 is completed and with the hypothetical new bridge complete.

“I’ll be gone by then, I won’t sweat it,” Sue said. “But people fight it and fight it. They’ve just got short-range vision.”

Ostby, for his part, bought

in for the long term when he and his wife purchased their Brunswick Forest home.

Since then, though, they’ve seen proposed plans for more homes to be built behind their Leeway Drive property, plans Ostby is concerned could exacerbate flooding in the area.

“Since the place was built,” Ostby said, “we’ve put in a lot more roofs, a lot more driveways, a lot more patios.”

Brunswick Forest isn’t the only area where residents are concerned about flooding. Ostby, in fact, didn’t buy in Brunswick Plantation because he and his wife visited after a heavy rain and decided it wasn’t for them.

In October, Carolina Shores and Calabash saw significant flooding when rains dumped nearly 20 inches of rain on the area, also causing U.S. 133 and a portion of U.S. 17 to close.

“There’s a lot of places that, if they’re only designing to a 10-year event, are going to be in real trouble,” Ostby said. “The town of Leland is struggling to figure out all these things that they’re being asked to handle.”

The same could be said about Brunswick County as a whole.

—Contact Adam Wagner at 910-343-2389 or via email at Adam.Wagner@StarNewsOnline.com.

Attack questions remain as shark fishing continues



Bailey Schucker, right, and his friend John Porter caught a shark during Memorial Day weekend in the waters around the Oak Island Fishing Pier. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY BAILEY SCHUCKER

Some beaches ban practice while others try

By Adam Wagner
StarNews Staff

OAK ISLAND — With a decapitated grouper head in tow, Bailey Schucker, 16, and friend John Porter set out to catch a shark.

It was Memorial Day weekend and their spot of choice was the Oak Island Pier, which allows shark fishing at the off-shore end. The teenagers used a kayak to paddle the grouper head about 100 yards off the pier, leaving it anchored with a small weight so it wouldn't move.

That was at about 5 p.m. They climbed on top of the

pier and waited.

About 9:30 p.m., they got a bite.

Requests denied

Shark fishermen like Porter and Schucker have been a presence in the waters around Oak Island without incident for decades — the Oak Island Pier even has the largest shark ever caught in North Carolina waters, a 1,150-pound tiger shark caught in 1966 and dubbed "YB Jaws," mounted and on display. And yet in the search for answers in the days following a pair

SEE BAN, A10

Surf City researches shark-related restrictions

By Trista Talton
StarNews Correspondent

SURF CITY — Can you close the beach? Will you close the beach? Do you have restrictions on chumming?

Surf City Town Manager Larry Bergman has been fielding these and

other questions since June 24, when an 8-year-old boy suffered what appeared to be a sharkbite off the town's shore.

Shark-related calls persisted this past weekend after a report that a 32-year-old Camp

SEE SHARKS, A10

of June 14 attacks that saw two teens vacationing in Oak Island maimed, town officials questioned whether shark fishers could have drawn the predators toward shore and vulnerable swimmers.

Both Oak Island Pier and Ocean Crest Pier allow shark fishing at certain times of the day, but both have rules against chumming (intentionally scattering bloody fish parts to attract predators).

In an interview less than 48 hours after the attacks, Betty Wallace, Oak Island's mayor, said, "If we have people that are out here and purposefully shark fishing, what you do to shark fish is chum the water to attract the shark. I would feel better if we could do something to limit or ban that act of trying to chum the water."

Oak Island did try to limit shark fishing, asking the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries on June 15 to ban the practice through the Fourth of July weekend. Louis Daniel, the director of the state agency, expressed skepticism about the request, saying the very act of fishing in large numbers could have a similar effect to chumming.

"This time of year you might have 50, 75, 100 people on the pier, and everybody's throwing bait in the water and cleaning fish and those kinds of things," Daniel said. "That basically sets up a huge chum slick."

Shortly after, Daniel declined the town's request. If he were to approve such a ban for Oak Island, Daniel said, he would have to enforce it statewide, and he didn't have the resources to do that and fulfill any other part of his agency's mission. Daniel also wondered

how his officers could prove someone who has a shark at the end of their line intentionally caught the animal.

After the state agency's denial, Tim Holloman, Oak Island's manager, asked the owners of both of the town's piers to ban shark fishing through Fourth of July weekend. The piers, he said, did not agree with that ban, and the town was powerless to enforce it.

'The hardest part'

Porter held on to the rod and, after fighting the shark for about a half an hour, the teens tried to work it from the end of the 900-foot pier, where shark fishing is allowed, to the beach. While Porter hung onto the rod, Schucker worked along the railing of the pier, dragging the 350-pound animal toward the shore.

"That was the hardest part," said Schucker, who lives in Wallburg, N.C.

Once the boys wrestled the shark into about 3 feet of water, Schucker sprinted off the pier, onto the beach and into the surf. He grabbed the animal by its tail and started to tug it toward the shore.

Bans elsewhere

Decades ago, the Jacksonville Beach Fishing Pier was home to a shark fishing club. When that structure was replaced by a new 1,300-foot pier in 2004, the Florida city took steps to curb shark fishing, in part to keep swimmers safe.

"It's not a very good idea to let people fish for sharks in areas where people swim a lot," said George Forbes, Jacksonville Beach's city manager.

The Jacksonville Beach Pier isn't the only one with a shark-fishing ban. Cities such as nearby Myrtle Beach, S.C., and Virginia Beach, Va., have also outlawed the practice. Monday, Emerald Isle, N.C., voted to temporarily ban shark fishing and



Kevin Hart fishes off the Oak Island Pier in Oak Island on June 30. PHOTO BY MATT BORN

chumming until Sept. 15.

In New Hanover County, Wrightsville Beach has a ban on fishing for or baiting sharks. South of Wrightsville, Carolina Beach has no rules prohibiting catching sharks, while Kure Beach Fishing Pier advertises a shark fishing season that begins June 1 and ends Sept. 15.

"Shark fishing causes a lot of problems," said Vera Bryant, the Jacksonville Beach pier's manager. "We're a big tourist attraction, and the people out there get really upset when they see someone cut a stingray in half and put it out as bait."

When the Jacksonville Beach pier's longtime fishermen see someone breaking the rules, Bryant said, they don't hesitate to report the violation to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The ban hasn't kept sharks from frequenting the area's water, though.

"We're actually overloaded with sharks," Bryant said.

'The worst is over'

Nobody knows what caused the shark attacks on North Carolina's coast

in June and July.

Matt Kenworthy, a research specialist at the University of North Carolina's Institute of Marine Sciences, said the recent attacks could be chalked up to any number of factors, from what sharks eat to water temperatures to where the animals could be mating.

One factor that is unlikely to have played a part in the attacks, though, is shark fishing.

"In terms of bringing in sharks, attracting sharks closer to the beaches, I wouldn't say that shark fishing is exactly bringing more sharks into the area by any of the methods that they're doing," Kenworthy said, reiterating Daniel's point that any fisherman using bait could attract a shark.

Data collected from the recent attacks, Kenworthy added, could be used if there is another spate of incidents in the future to determine if there is a common cause.

At East Carolina University, a team of shark experts has advanced one hypothesis focusing on the water's warmth.

Roger Rulifson, a senior

scientist at the school, and Chuck Bangle, a graduate student focusing on sharks, believe that higher-than-normal air and water temperatures could be forcing the animals to migrate earlier than usual, also cutting down on the amount of food available.

"If there were higher-than-usual water temperatures earlier in the year," Rulifson said, "this northward migration that would normally happen in waves could bunch together or maybe happen in a couple large groups. And they're moving northward, so they're all forced to spread out and find something to eat, which includes the beach."

To back their hypothesis, the ECU team points to the south-to-north pattern of the first six attacks. The last two attacks, he said, could be stragglers or anomalies.

If any more attacks happen this summer, Rulifson said, they could be the one or two that happen off the North Carolina shores in a typical season.

"I think the worst is over," he said.

'It'll whip your butt'

With the shark dragged

"Shark fishing causes a lot of problems. We're a big tourist attraction, and the people out there get really upset when they see someone cut a stingray in half and put it out as bait."

Vera Bryant, the Jacksonville Beach pier's manager

into 4 or 5 inches of water, Schucker and Porter stopped to take pictures and measure the animal — 8 feet, 1 inch long and between 300 and 350 pounds.

In one photo, posted to the Oak Island Pier's website, Schucker can be seen grinning at the camera, his hands on the sand tiger shark's fins, as Porter hangs on to the animal's nose.

"We always do the best we can to keep them in the water, put them through the least amount of stress we can," he said.

After all the photos were taken, Porter and Schucker let the shark return to the ocean. It was about 10:30 p.m.

The experience of catching a shark is challenging, Schucker said, but also a rush.

"It'll whip your butt. They're fun to catch, man," he said. "Catching something that's twice your size, three times your size, that's a lot of fun."

Schucker does not believe that shark fishermen are to blame for the recent shark attacks, instead pointing to sea turtles laying eggs in the area and the northward migration patterns of sharks.

"I think they're really just looking for something to blame it on," he said.

— Contact Adam Wagner at 910-343-2389 or Adam.Wagner@StarNewsOnline.com.

LIVES 11A

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side.



LOCAL & STATE 1B

Principal decides
not to resign.

E SCHOOLS

ound



ngton. Photo by Matt Born

Ivy League schools cepted into three



Judge Sandra Ray ruled there was probable cause to hold James Bradley on first-degree murder charges in Shannon Rippy Vannewkirk's presumed slaying. Vannewkirk's body has not been found.

A murder accusation, but no body

Murder conviction with no corpse rare but not unheard of

By Adam Wagner
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James Bradley is accused of murdering a Wilmington woman whose body police have not found and, experts say, could be convicted even if Shannon Rippy Vannewkirk is never located.

On May 16, New Hanover County District Court Judge Sandra Ray Criner ruled there was probable cause to hold Bradley, of Wilmington on first-degree murder charges in Vannewkirk's presumed slaying. Bradley is being held without bail in the New Hanover County jail.

During the probable cause hearing, Rick Miller, Bradley's publicly appointed attorney, contested the introduction of at least two pieces of evidence on the grounds that they presumed Vannewkirk was dead.

"At this point of this investigation, at this very minute, we do not know what happened to Shannon," Miller said.

There is, however, a lengthy track record of prosecutors using circumstantial evidence to show someone was killed when there is not a corpse present and also to convict a suspect. At least one "no-body" case has been tried in every

See **NO BODY** | 4F

NO BODY

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state except Idaho and New Hampshire, with a conviction rate of about 88 percent, according to www.nobody-cases.com.

Prosecutors in these cases face two hurdles: establishing that a missing person is, in fact, the victim of a murder and proving the defendant is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

"It's like a 100-meter race where the murderer starts at the 20-meter mark, and I don't care if you're Usain Bolt, you're going to have a hard time beating anyone who has a 20-meter head start," said Tad DiBiase, an attorney who runs nobody-cases.com.

James Payne, a local defense attorney, agreed with DiBiase that no-body cases can be tough for prosecutors, particularly considering that the absence of a body means the absence of information such as the cause of death, circumstances tying the defendant to the death and the fact that the presumed victim is, in fact, deceased.

"In my perspective, I think (lacking a body) makes it more difficult for prosecutors," Payne said.

If Rippy's body is not found, DiBiase has some idea of what New Hanover County District Attorney Ben David and his prosecutors must accomplish to convict Bradley.

"No-body murder trials tend to be lengthy and full of little pieces of evidence," DiBiase said. "I talk about the puzzle, because puzzles

are made up of many, many pieces, and that's what your case has to be."

Proving death

The first step in any no-body prosecution is establishing that the presumed victim is, in fact, dead, a task that's become easier as cellphones and other technology have become ubiquitous.

"With all of the electronic trails people leave behind you can tell very quickly when somebody is missing and probably dead," DiBiase said, pointing to cellphone and social media use.

Chris Ross, the district attorney of Pontotoc, Hughes and Seminole counties in Oklahoma, has gained three convictions in two separate no-body cases.

"What you generally see is everything they did in their life in a given day all stopped at the same day and time," Ross said.

Establishing that a person stopped communicating with family members and that their cellphone and bank activity stopped at the same point in time is one method of proving a disruption.

Then, prosecutors look at what the supposed victim left behind. For Ross, the leaving behind of routine objects such as luggage, a toothbrush, a hairbrush and, for women, makeup and jewelry can point to death.

"The question isn't that you couldn't live without that because you could," Ross said, "but if you were leaving voluntarily, why would you leave all that behind? And the common-sense answer is if you were leaving volun-

tarily, you wouldn't."

The last no-body case Ross tried was the murder of 6-year-old Logan Tucker by his mother, Katherine Rutan Pollard, in Woodward, Okla., on June 23, 2002.

"He is not capable of going out and living on his own, so that would be something you look at," Ross said.

During Bradley's probable cause hearing, David used a list of points to attempt to establish that Vannewkirk was likely dead.

Among those were Vannewkirk's plans to have brunch with her mother the day after she disappeared, that Vannewkirk was enjoying life, that she hadn't disappeared without explanation before, that she was a happy person and that police couldn't find any evidence that she is alive.

"There's probable cause to believe she's not just missing, but that she's dead today," David told Judge Ray on May 15.

Establishing guilt

Lies, or seeming lies, can be damning pieces of circumstantial evidence in no-body cases.

John Lewin, a deputy district attorney in Los Angeles County, Calif., has prosecuted at least four murder cases without bodies.

"I make my cases, generally speaking, because defendants cannot keep their stories straight about material parts of the case," Lewin said. "I'm not saying they forget what happened. I'm saying they will give very detailed descriptions of things that happened, but

they're different."

For instance, Carol Jeanne Meyer Lubahn disappeared from her Torrance, Calif., home on March 31, 1981. In a case Lewin prosecuted, her husband, Michael Lubahn Clark, initially told police the last time he'd seen or heard from his wife was when he heard a door slam.

Then, Clark said he'd seen Lubahn drive away.

Then, during his 2012 murder trial, Clark told a jury that he knew his wife had come home the night she disappeared because he tracked her footprints with powder.

"When you can't keep the same story, that's not a lack of memory," Lewin said. "That's a lie. And when you're lying about something that you should be able to remember and you have detailed recollections that are just different, that's a problem."

At a sentencing hearing in early 2013, Lewin read from a letter Clark wrote to Lubahn's mother in which he detailed Lubahn returning home about 1:30 a.m. on March 31, 1981, and revealing she was with another man. An argument ensued, Clark wrote, during which he pushed his wife and she hit her head on a coffee table.

Later, Clark said he had punched Lubahn and, believing she was dead, sank her body about 200 yards into the Pacific Ocean near a Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif., lighthouse.

During Bradley's probable cause hearing, WPD detectives told Ray that, like Clark, Bradley lied to investigators.

Bradley initially told po-

lice he'd last seen Vannewkirk on April 3, two days before she disappeared. Using traffic camera videos, though, they knew he'd gone downtown on April 5, and security camera footage from a gas station showed a woman police believe was Vannewkirk in his red, two-door Tahoe, said Kevin Tully, a WPD detective.

On April 15, police served a search warrant on Bradley's apartment and told him they knew he'd been downtown. Immediately, Tully said, Bradley's story changed, with him now telling police he'd picked Vannewkirk up on April 5 and driven her around Greenfield Lake for 60 to 90 minutes, dropping her off at Village Market.

Tully, though, testified that he knew Village Market's security footage didn't show Vannewkirk, and he told Bradley that.

"His demeanor changed immediately," Tully said of Bradley. "He was extremely wet. At one point I thought he was crying because there was so much water running down his face."

Ross, the Oklahoma prosecutor, said lies can be crucial evidence in no-body cases.

"Oftentimes what a defendant does is spin a web of deceit," he said. "They end up getting caught in it because they don't know what you know, and their first story is capable of being disproven, and you confront them with it and they end up having to change their story."

Lies can be an effective tool for the prosecution in

no-body cases because juries use common sense, and Ross added, if a juror's child or loved one changed their story, it would likely be indicative of some wrongdoing.

What's next

Ray's verdict that there was probable cause to hold Bradley in Vannewkirk's killing has given investigators the time to continue building the case against him in another slaying, David said on Friday.

While looking for Vannewkirk's body April 29 in a Hampstead field owned by Steve Mott, who employed both Vannewkirk and Bradley, police found another body. Investigators initially believed they had found Vannewkirk, but medical tests showed it was actually Elisha Tucker, 34, of Wilmington. Tucker's mother, Rose Waldron, last saw her Aug 15.

To determine whether Bradley can be charged in Tucker's killing, David asked Ray to sign off on expedited forensic analysis of items collected during searches of Bradley's apartment. She did, and the analysis, which cost \$3,500, is underway.

David said he was told he and investigators will have results within two months.

"There's no more time deadlines, and we anticipate proceeding normally with going to a grand jury (in Vannewkirk's case) in the not-too-distant future," David said.

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WILMINGTON | Traffic police more visible



Wilmington Police Department Officer J.E. Moore uses radar to catch speeders along Long Leaf Hills Drive in Wilmington on July 26. Photos by Mike Spencer

Spotting speeders

Increased enforcement credited with reducing citations in city

BY ADAM WAGNER
Adam.Wagner@StarNewsOnline.com

If you've got a lead foot, you might want to ease up on Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway and Rogersville Road, or steer clear of them entirely.

In 2012, the Wilmington Police Department issued more speeding tickets on those roads than anywhere else.

Wilmington police handed out 282 tickets in the area of 2300 Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway, the most common location for them to pull drivers over for speeding, followed closely by the 200 block of Rogersville Road, where 261 stops were made.

An additional 70 stops were made in the 300 block of Rogersville Road, and humping the two together would give the street more than 330 stops, easily the most for any single location.

Plenty of other drivers saw WPD officers during 2012, but the total number of speeding tickets issued is declining. According to data obtained by the StarNews, WPD issued 4,071 tickets last year, marking the fifth consecutive year the department's speeding citations have decreased.

Among the reasons a WPD spokeswoman gave for the drop in citations are the success of a program focused on decreasing violent crimes by



Officer Moore monitors radar in his Chevrolet Camaro patrol car.

strictly enforcing speeding laws, the prioritization of more violent crimes with task forces that pull some officers off patrol and the department's ongoing manpower shortage.

Wilmington police have implemented a program called Data-Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety that makes law enforcement highly visible in select areas to cut down on the

BY THE NUMBERS

Wilmington Police Department speeding citations

2012: 4,071
2011: 4,843
2010: 6,008
2009: 6,117
2008: 6,247

Types of violations for 2012

Aggressive driving: 14
Exceeding safe speed: 352
Impeding traffic: 6
Speed competition: 7
Speeding in highway work zone: 3
Speed violation > 15 mph: 121
Speeding: 3,243
Speeding in a school zone: 202

Source: Wilmington Police Department

INSIDE

See a map of the city's top 10 spots for speed-related citations, 6A

EXPLORE

Online | Search a database on speeding tickets at StarNewsOnline.com/Speeding.



SPEED

Continued from 1A

number of crimes involving motor vehicles. The program is supported by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the National Institute of Justice.

"We believe by hitting those areas where there was a lot of speeding, we were also able to deter crimes around those areas," said Linda Rawley, a WPD spokeswoman.

Trying to cut down on speeding isn't the only way WPD has tried to address violent crime, with programs such as the department's Mobile Field Force and Operation Tranquility pushing some officers off normal patrol.

"When we started focusing on some of these task forces, that kind of pulled some of those officers away from traffic enforcement," Rawley said.

Even though fewer officers might be focused on traffic enforcement, the officers who are assigned to the area's roads and District Attorney Ben David's office are working together to crack down on speeding throughout the county, and they believe targeted enforcement is making a dent.

"We cut down on the amount of speeding in (targeted) areas," Rawley said, "and we started driving the number of speeding citations down."

The speeder

It's a steamy afternoon in July, and Officer J.E. Moore knows it's the kind of day where Wilmington drivers can't help but push the limit.

"It gets busy whenever that sun comes out," he said.

Moore, a 16-year veteran of the Wilmington Police Department who has been in the traffic division since 2008, is sitting in his unmarked Camaro in a driveway on Oleander Drive at about 2 p.m.

It takes only about 10 seconds to prove Moore's hunch right, as a white Honda Civic flashes past, tailgating a red truck, and the radar unit on the dashboard flashes 58 mph in the 45 mph zone.

After quickly checking to make sure that pulling into the busy road won't endanger anyone, Moore floors his gas and approaches the car, which doesn't seem to notice Moore until his sirens let out an unmistakable *whoop whoop*.

The older woman driving the Civic claims she was surprised to see Moore's flashing blue lights behind her because she was unaware of how fast she was going.

"Drivers don't pay attention. I think they don't look for the signs," Moore said.

The best outcome for being pulled over for speeding will be a warning, the worst a hefty fine and jacked-up insurance rates. And a speeder who isn't stopped and is overly reckless can cause a serious accident.

So if those are the risks, why do so many push the gas pedal a little more than they're supposed to?

Moore hears a variety of reasons from the people he stops.

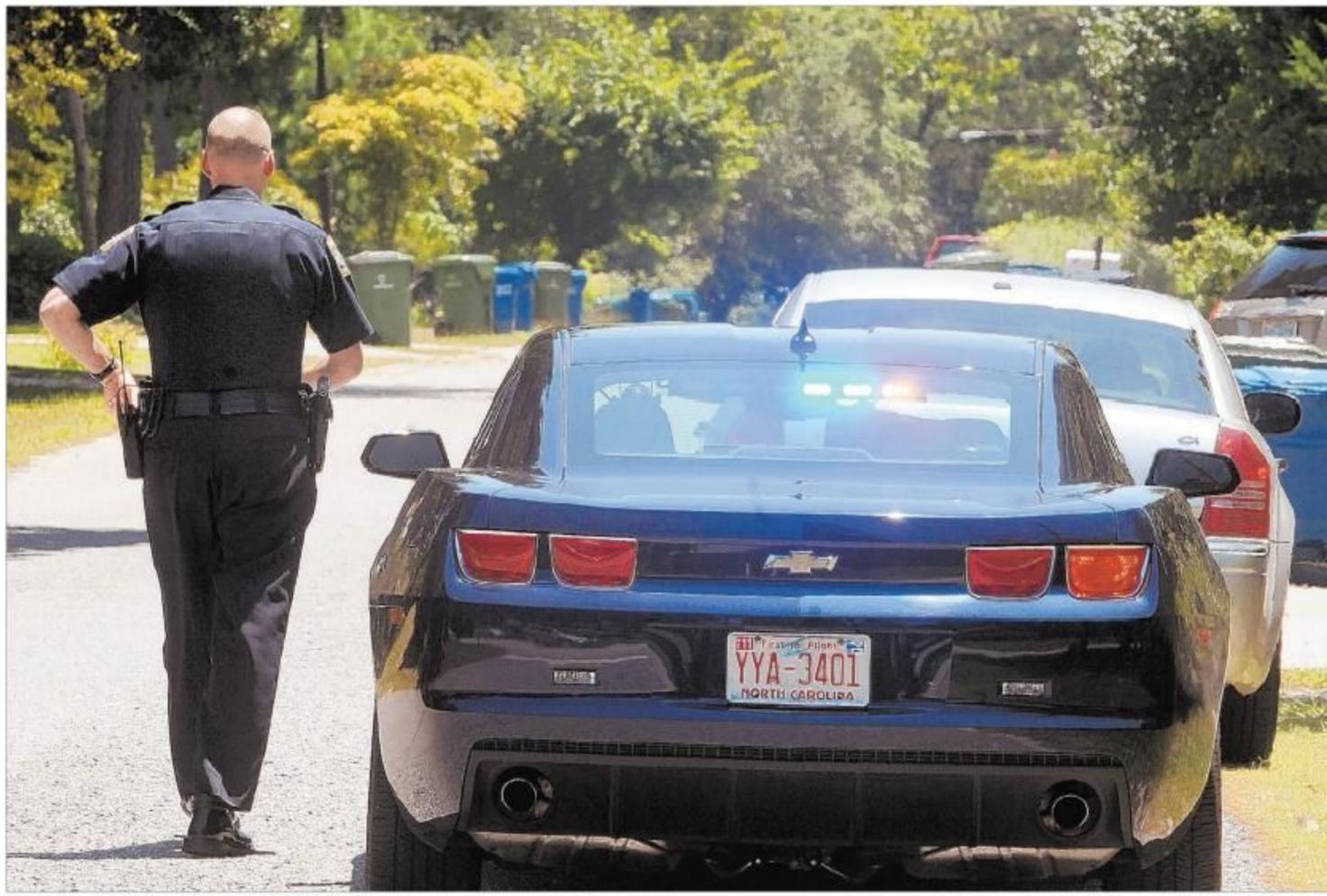
"Most of the time, they'll say, 'I'm late for work.' Some people just have no reason at all," Moore said. "Some people, you'll just look at their history and they just don't care."

Jennifer Andrews has accumulated at least 20 tickets since she started driving in 1999, but paying more than \$4,000 in fines and court fees isn't enough to keep her from driving over the speed limit.

"I've had so many tickets and I still speed. I just pay the fines and accumulate points, but it doesn't stop me," Andrews said. "... I'm always in a hurry to go nowhere."

In an effort to keep her from stepping on the gas pedal too hard, Andrews' husband bought her a car with cruise control.

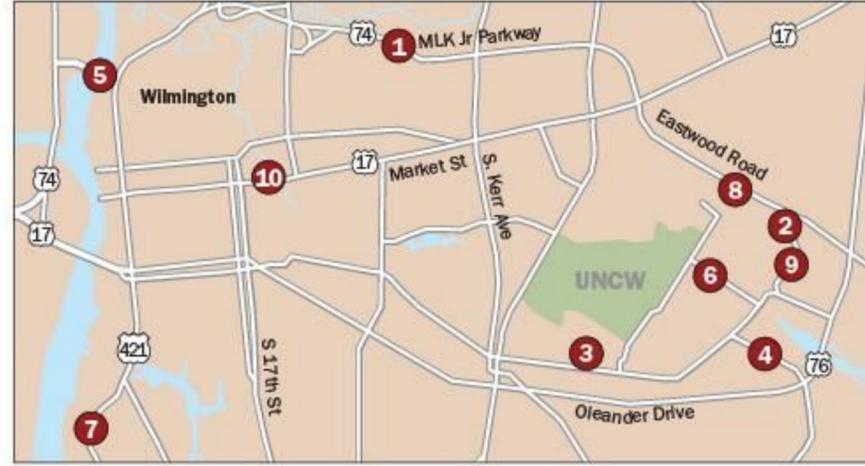
Even that wasn't enough, though, as Andrews' latest



Wilmington Police Department Officer J.E. Moore uses radar to catch speeders along Long Leaf Hills Drive on July 26. 'It gets busy whenever that sun comes out,' said Moore, a 16-year veteran of the police department. Photo by Mike Spencer

SPEED SPOTS

These are the 10 spots where the Wilmington Police Department says it issued the most speed-related citations in 2012 and how many it issued at each site.



- 1 200 block of MLK Jr. Parkway (282)
- 2 200 block of Rogersville Road (261)
- 3 200 block of Wood Dale Drive (145)
- 4 200 block of Greenville Avenue (99)
- 5 Isabel Holmes Bridge (97)
- 6 200 block of Hooker Road (97)
- 7 1900 block of Burnett Boulevard (82)
- 8 1200 block of Eastwood Road (74)
- 9 300 block of Rogersville Road (70)
- 10 2100 block of Market Street (69)

More online: Go to StarNewsOnline.com/Speeding to search a database of 2012 Wilmington and New Hanover County speeding tickets.

SOURCE: Wilmington Police Department

ticket came from the N.C. Highway Patrol in June when she was nabbed driving 82 mph in a 70 mph zone on N.C. 40.

"I don't know why I speed - I just drive. I can't stand being behind people, and I think that's my biggest problem," Andrews said. "I don't like being in traffic, I don't like being behind people. I get in front of people and then I don't slow down."

Lance Bowser, who is concerned about his Sixth Street neighborhood, thinks habitual speeding is tied to the adrenaline rush that comes with the engine at full throttle.

"I just think drivers don't think that anybody else exists and they just like to drive fast. It's more fun," he said.

The stop

Just because someone's driving a tad over the speed limit doesn't necessarily mean he'll get stopped.

"Not everyone's going 45 (on Oleander), but we don't look at people going 5 over the speed limit," Moore said. "Are they violating the law? Yes. And the law says I could stop them and give them a citation because they are traveling over the speed limit, but I would rather wait for somebody who's being a little more significant or causing a hazard."

Once an officer does pull someone over, he might give the driver a warning instead of a citation after reviewing the driver's history and considering the extent of the violation.

If a ticket is the result, though, it's probably a good idea to avoid talking back to the officer, particularly if you plan on challenging it in court.

"If they're nice or if they're real nasty to me, I'll put that in there for the judge to see," Moore said.

Moore proved this later in the day when a black Honda Civic coming home from Juncle Rapids blew past his spot at 60 mph, immediately tailgating another car.

Moore pursued and, when he made the stop, the driver was adamant that she had been driving 48 mph when the radar showed her going 10 mph faster than that and the officer's car struggled to catch up with her even though he was flooring the gas.

"She was just kind of dumbfounded that she was getting stopped," Moore said. "She said 48. I said no, there was no way."

Moore then simply wrote the woman a ticket and let her know her options.

The radar

To pull someone over and successfully cite him, an officer needs two corresponding pieces of evidence.

One is the radar, which has the word "STALKER" etched in white letters on the side of its black case.

The other is the officer's own eyes and judgment.

"I have to be able to say that guy is the one speeding. That guy's going faster than everybody," Moore said. "Then ... I use my radar to corroborate that."

The officer's opinion is crucial because speed given by the radar detector does not necessarily mean that's the speed the driver is going: The machines are capable of giving off faulty readings.

"There's times you take a clock and the radar may say a number, but you're looking at a car and you're not seeing

Art by Stacie Greene Hidek

"Drivers don't pay attention. I think they don't look at the signs."

J.E. MOORE, WILMINGTON POLICE OFFICER

it. So you're trained not to do an enforcement with that clock," Moore said, shortly after the radar said a car was going 71 mph even though it was clearly much closer to the limit.

Moore added that if too many people complain about an officer, he loses credibility.

To be qualified to use a radar detector, officers have to complete 32 hours of training and classroom work, pass a written test and pass a motor skills test with the radar.

In the final part of the test, officers have to time three cars apiece coming toward them and going away from them while they are sitting still, as well as three cars going away from them and moving toward them while the officer is moving. Once the test is complete, the officers can have been off on their estimates by a total of about 32 mph.

"They don't cut you any slack on it because it's a good tool. Once you go through that program, you have to be able to estimate the speed of cars," Moore said.

Officers who are not certified to use radar do not have the units in their cars.

The legal process

Every speeder can plead

REPORT A PROBLEM

Wilmington residents who are concerned about speeding on their streets or in their neighborhoods can call the Wilmington Police Department's front desk at 343-3600.

guilty and pay a fine, but he'll also see an increase in car insurance and receive points on his license.

The other option is to attend traffic court, with the date set at least 30 days from the citation.

In New Hanover County, the District Attorney's Office has traffic court at 8 a.m. each Friday. On those days, district attorneys, not judges, handle roughly 1,000 cases of speeding tickets, expired tags and other violations. "We only handle traffic tickets, so we deal with soccer moms and bankers on those days so we don't have to clutter up the judge's time, we don't have to have the officer there," said Samantha Dooies, District Attorney Ben David's administrative assistant.

Speeders who attend traffic court often have their violations dropped to nonmoving, improper equipment violations once the drivers swear that they are not a repeat offender.

Sometimes, the driver has to complete driving school before the citation is reduced from speeding to improper equipment.

Every driver younger than 25 who receives a citation is sent to driving school.

The District Attorney's Office cannot give legal advice because personal histories and insurance plans vary, but it is usually useful to get the charge reduced to improper equipment.

"Typically this is a good option because a moving violation versus a nonmoving violation is something that's generally positive, but that's not the case in every instance," Dooies said.

Drivers also have the option of avoiding a ticket entirely with a prayer for justice continued (PJC), but that has some catches.

By using a PJC, a driver avoids seeing his insurance rates rise or getting points on his license. He does still have to pay a fine and court costs and attend traffic court.

Each household can use only one PJC in a three-year period, and it's not an option if your wife or dad has already used it.

Furthermore, if a driver uses a PJC and receives a similar ticket within the three-year period, he'll get the court costs from the second offense, both fines, insurance from both tickets and likely the points from both tickets.

Not every offender can use a PJC. If the violation is more serious or reoccurring, the officer can choose to give the individual his own court date, in which he will testify to the crime's severity.

"That's an indication to us that something funny's hap-

pened here, that they have a really bad record or they mouthed off to the officer," Dooies said, adding that a reduction in punishment is unlikely.

The hot spots

So how do officers decide where to patrol?

Some spots, such as Oleander Drive and Market Street, are obvious, while others are based on officers' experience and residents' complaints. Moore, who also takes reports from serious and fatal wrecks as part of his job on the traffic unit, will patrol in locations where speed contributed to injuries or fatalities.

"I go where there's a problem. I work the whole city," he said. "... If I've taken a fatality or I've done bad wrecks in certain areas and I know where there's a lot of bad speeding, I can go work that, too."

In other locations, such as Waltmore Road and Long Leaf Hills Drive, police receive regular complaints from residents about speed. When the department receives such a complaint, officers check to see if there is a problem and how severe it is before patrolling the area regularly.

"I will (go after drivers closer to the speed limit) if there's a speed complaint," Moore said. "That's when we have a little less tolerance because people are out here speeding (and) people are complaining about it."

Bowser, who has lived in the 500 block of South Sixth Street for about a decade, would like to see police step up their presence in his neighborhood. Cars routinely use Sixth Street as a cut-through from Market Street to Dawson or Wooster streets.

"A street like this is fairly narrow with cars on both sides, especially from Church to Castle. It doesn't seem like it slows anybody down," Bowser said.

Bowser added that he's complained to police and briefly saw an officer in the area, but the presence was not maintained.

When officers are patrolling busier roads, they also have to consider their ability to safely enter flow of traffic to chase a speeder.

On Oleander, for instance, Moore figures speeders tend to outpace everyone else, giving him a chance to catch up.

"You have a little gap where you can turn out," he said. "And when you do it, you can't hesitate. You just gotta go."

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AFTER THE FLOOD

STATE OF RECOVERY



Sylvia Liner talks about how the water came into her home in Carolina Shores during the heavy rains that hit the area three weeks ago. KEN BLEVINS/STARNEWS

Brunswick residents still putting their lives back together

By Adam Wagner
StarNews Staff

CAROLINA SHORES — Fred and Sylvia Liner's dining room table is still where it was Oct. 2 as they ate salmon, listening to the rain and watching the water rise.

It's one of very few pieces of furniture that is.

Pretty much everything else — from their stove to

Fred's mother's furniture in their bedroom to the furniture Sylvia had owned since the eighth grade — is gone, lost to a flood of water that seeped into their Sunfield Drive home.

Soon, the table will need to go, too, because its legs were soaked in the contaminated water. Sylvia needs somewhere flat to work on starting over, though, so for now it stays.

The Liners' home was one of 44 in Carolina Shores that received some kind of damage during the flooding, said John Mendenhall, the town's administrator. Much of that damage was minor, but the storm that dumped more rain on Carolina Shores than 1999's Hurricane Floyd brought at least half a foot

RECOVERY

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of water to six homes.

Municipal expenses

In all, the town of fewer than 4,000 people spent between \$5,000 and \$10,000 on overtime during the storm, had about \$20,000 in damage to roads, and will likely spend about \$200,000 removing debris from the town's canals, ditches and storm drainage system, Mendenhall said.

Brunswick County has tallied \$105,000 in storm-related expenses thus far, said Ann Hardy, the county's manager, of which about \$100,000 was payroll expenses, primarily in overtime salaries. That number could go up as the county's utilities department determines how much it will cost to repair damage to the county's system.

New Hanover County estimates its costs at more than \$100,000, though figures are still being finalized, county spokeswoman Ruth Ravitz Smith said.

Carolina Beach's government spent about \$48,000 responding to the storm and also suffered about \$166,000 in damage to public property.

Governments, though, could still be in line for some aid. North Carolinamanagement officials could release damage estimates from the storm as early as Monday, said Julia Jarema, a N.C. Emergency Management spokeswoman. If those numbers total more than about \$13 million, the state could receive some Federal Emergency Management Agency funds through the public assistance program.

That money would be distributed on the local level to counties that suffered at least \$3.56 in damage per person. Brunswick, for instance, would need to suffer at least \$382,000 in damage across the county to receive any potential funding.

Rebuilding one room at a time

Fred and Sylvia Liner's driveway has a large storage pod in it, holding items that weren't among the four dump-trucks-full that were taken away. Behind the storage pod sits a purple van, all of its doors and trunk open because Fred is hoping it will dry out enough to be

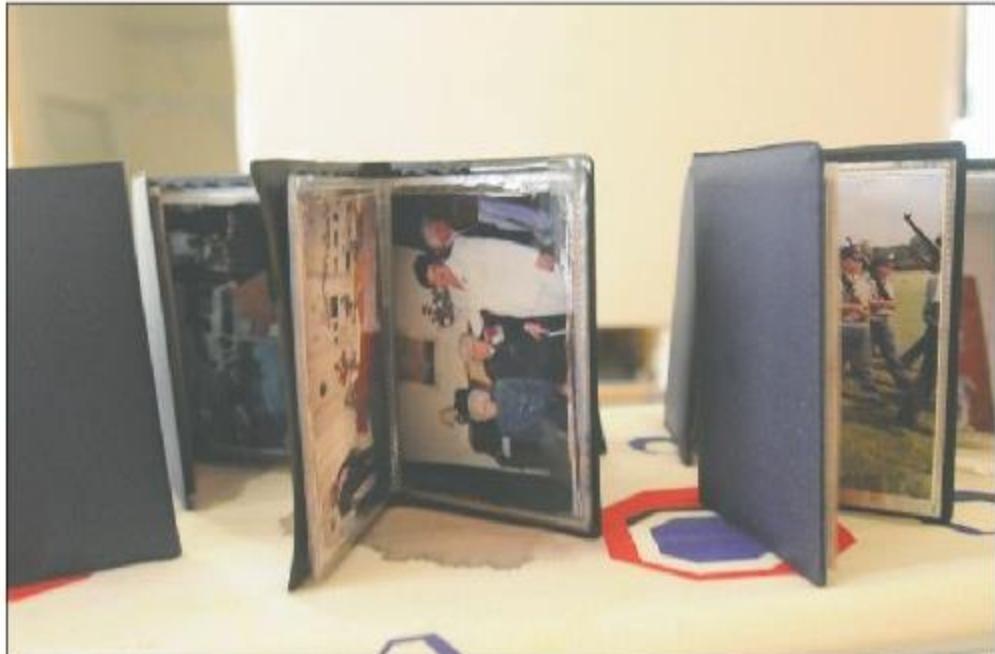


Photo albums dry out on top of an ironing board at Fred and Sylvia Liner's home in Carolina Shores.

PHOTOS BY KEN BLEVINS/STARNEWS



The Liners' rose bed was moved a few feet during the heavy rains that came through Carolina Shores recently.

usable again.

Individual homeowners like the Liners will not be receiving federal emergency funding because too few homes received major damage according to federal guidelines, Brian Watts, Brunswick County's emergency management director, said Monday.

Before they left that Friday evening, Sylvia called their insurance company to let them know the house was being flooded. Fortunately, their mortgage required flood insurance.

"It's like, what do you do? Think about what you would grab," she said, recounting that night.

For her, it was an evening dress, wedding photos and a Bible. Her husband grabbed three guitars and a trumpet.

Fred put a keyboard up on their bed and Sylvia, a Mary Kay saleswoman, stashed her makeup stock in the bathtub.

Then they left, their wheels spinning out for a few heart-stopping seconds at the end of the driveway, only the mailboxes guiding them to safety because the road was hidden under water.

They beat a hasty retreat to the Econo Lodge in Shallotte.

The Liners returned to their home Saturday with a crew from Back to Normal Restoration Services. The crew stayed from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., soaking up water throughout the home, ripping up sopping carpet and setting up high-power dehumidifiers.

It would be Monday, Oct. 5, before the water would recede and the Liners would return to their house again. The dehumidifiers had been running nonstop since Saturday.

"I used as much electricity in three days as I usually use in a month," Fred said.

The cleaning-out process continued, with crews cutting away wet drywall, ending the walls about knee-level throughout the house. All of the Liners' possessions were moved into the front yard where they had to decide what was salvageable and what would be tossed into one of the trucks.

"That was hard," Sylvia said, looking at a cellphone picture of one of the trucks, its bed filled with the possessions they'd spent a lifetime

The cost of rain

How much did the rains from Oct. 2-5 cost Brunswick County governments?

Carolina Shores: \$230,000 (\$200,000 removing debris, \$20,000 damage to roads, up to \$10,000 overtime)

Brunswick County: At least \$105,000 (\$100,000 overtime, about \$1,100 for mosquito control after the storm, could rise because county utilities are still assessing damage)

Carolina Beach: \$214,000 (\$166,000 in damage to public property, \$48,000 in personnel and response expenses)

cobbling together.

Now, the Liners are about four to six weeks away from moving back into their home. In the meantime, they're staying rent-free in the Sunset Beach house owned by a fellow member of their First Baptist Church North Myrtle Beach congregation.

Sylvia had begun redesigning her house before the flood, planning to go room by room. She'd only completed her son's room, the one where her husband redid the floor and painted.

The flood gave her no choice but to hurry up her project, and she's already chosen fabrics for her sunroom, new couch and a chair for their living room.

"Now," Sylvia said, "I don't have to go one room at a time."

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