

Sweet deal

Enfield man creates additional jobs with new business

BY KHAI HOANG
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ENFIELD — On Dennis Street in Enfield was an old, decrepit and dilapidated building overrun with flora, until native Marvin Shearin II and his partners

decided to invest at least \$1 million in turning the facility around. What used to be a murky and bramble-covered structure was cleared to make way for a state-of-the-art sweet potato storage and curing

facility, which cools and dries the spuds, Shearin Farms of Enfield and Jones Family Farms (of Bailey) collaborated to bring about the new business to the town: Enfield Bins and Taters LLC. The sweet potato facility is a way to diversify his farming portfolio and rejuvenate the town

of Enfield, Shearin said. Already, he has hired numerous employees to build the storage containers to hold this season's upcoming harvest.

The facility is capable of holding

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Marvin Shearin II digs up a few sweet potatoes Tuesday afternoon on one of his farms in Enfield. He noted this season's harvest will begin in about a week.

KHAI HOANG | THE DAILY HERALD

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The Daily Herald

Lake Gaston author to speak in Warrenton

BY JENNY GRAY
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WARRENTON — Lake Gaston writer Arlene Sandra Bice will recount the tales of her bartending days Friday evening while presenting her latest book at Warren FoodWorks.

Bice recently completed "An Afternoon Crowd at the American House Tavern," a poetic narrative memoir

of her time working as a bartender in her 30s.

"My few years tending bar at the American House Tavern, in the middle of horse country in the 70s, were the best of times," Bice said. "Some of the people I met became dear friends, and some were dark horses, and some just had plain old good stories. I love a good story."

Bice compared that tavern, in New Egypt, N.J., to a small neighborhood.

"You get to know some (people) very well and others only their façade," Bice said. "But

people reveal more than they realize when they are in public."

She said the book came to her like a bolt out of the blue.

"I have no idea which of my deceased ancestors dredged up these old memories and sent them to me or why it came, but it lifted me out of a gloomy week, filling me with so much laughter while I wrote it and again, when I re-wrote it," she said.

This is not Bice's first book — she has 10 under her belt. When she moved to Bordentown, N.J. in 1972, she was intrigued by its historic, Revolutionary War past, and that led to her career as a writer.

Bice loved books, and to that end, she opened a bookshop in Bordentown where she sold new, used and rare books. One day a man came in and tried to sell her some books about the next town down the road, and she thought, "Why don't they write about Bordentown? We have the history."

She decided to write those books.

SEE AUTHOR | A5

HCC looking for solutions

BY JENNY GRAY
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WELDON — On the campus of Halifax Community College is a big black box. Inside are pens, detailed maps of the college, evacuation plans — all the information emergency responders need to combat an active shooter.

If a shooting occurs, U.S. Highway 158 will be closed in front of the campus and no one will be able to enter or exit without permission from local law enforcement. Staging areas and a control center will be implemented immediately. The campus will be locked down.

Sgt. Emmett Smith, the college's chief of security, will be the first to start hunting down the bad guys. The only campus officer with a weapon, Smith will be alone as he begins the initial hunt. He will have



Sgt. Emmett Smith, Halifax Community College's chief of security, spoke during HCC's Board of Trustees meeting on Wednesday in Weldon.

no one to watch his back. It could take up to seven agonizing minutes for other law enforcement personnel to arrive.

Smith said he knows he could be the first in the bull's-eye. In the cases of many American school shootings, armed campus officers are the first targets of armed gunmen. Smith is aware of this fact, yet he goes to work every day.

"The first person to go after an active shooter is myself," he quietly told members of the college's Board of Trustees Wednesday. "I'll be the guy in an active shooter situation."

One way out

Members of the HCC Buildings and Grounds Committee heard a somber scenario as they discussed emergency procedures at the college Wednesday morning. One of the biggest threats to campus security, they learned, is the entrance/exit at U.S. Highway 158.

It's the only way to get in and out of Halifax Community College.

"That's a big issue," HCC President/CEO Ervin Griffin Sr. told members of the committee.

Michael Felt, chairman of the HCC Board of Trustees, agreed.

"I think we need to take a new tack and readdress it," he said.

The main topic of Wednesday's conversation was a review of the college's Health, Safety and Security Procedures Manual. Besides Smith, also presenting information was Kevin Kupietz, HCC fire service/EMS coordinator. The college regularly performs emergency drills now, but there was a time they didn't.

"We started doing drills soon after Dr. Griffin came here," Kupietz said, adding there is no legal requirement that community colleges do so.

After the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the Roanoke Valley was already hyper sensitive. Then a bomb threat to an area high school led to heated altercations between local law enforcement officers and members of the public, Kupietz said.

"In this area, even mentioning doing after-shooter drills was taboo," Kupietz said, adding people were fearful. "They thought (drills) would give people ideas."

That changed on April 16, 2007, when Virginia Tech student Seung-Hui Cho shot and killed 32 people and wounded 17 others on campus before committing suicide — the deadliest shooting incident by a single gunman in U.S. history, according to MSNBC. Kupietz said that incident brought about new thinking. As an English-class project, HCC students were asked to film a video demonstrating safety procedures, and drills became commonplace on campus.

"(The film) was done about four, five years ago," Kupietz added. "It's a little dated but after we have our revised plan, we will ask the students to do another."

HCC has two security guards besides the chief, but Smith said he is the only one with a gun. However, other sworn officers, including those with the Halifax County Sheriff's Office and Weldon Police

SEE HCC | A2



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OUTSIDE FRIDAY
Sunny. High of 72, low of 48. Mostly clear at night. Wind 6 to 8 mph. **A4**



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Mail scam targeted Weldon resident

BY ERIN CARSON
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The Weldon Police Department is warning Roanoke Valley residents of a potential mail fraud scam that promises money but is meant to steal personal information and possibly bank funds.

Weldon Deputy Police Chief James Avens said law enforcement learned of the scam when a resident brought in a check and a letter detailing how the person could earn money for being a "secret shopper" at Walmart. Avens said the victim recognized it as a scam and contacted law enforcement before giving out any information.

The letter came in a white 9.5-inch by 13-inch U.S. Postal Service priority mail envelope. It asked the victim to deposit a \$1,450 check in his or her bank account, go to Walmart and survey the customer service and test the MoneyGram service by transferring \$1,200 to a name and address listed in the letter. Avens said someone asking for money before giving



A Weldon resident received this paperwork in the mail, which the Weldon Police Department believes is a scam.

away a reward is a sign that something isn't kosher.

"Any time someone asks you for money back out of the money they gave you, it's

a red flag," he said. "Someone says 'I'll give you \$1,400 out of the blue and you don't know them, it's a big red flag.'"

Another fishy part,

he noted, was the letter asking the victim to send a text message instead of calling an actual number, which he said a legitimate business probably

wouldn't do. Avens said he has seen similar scams in the past, especially near the holidays. "Holidays are right around the corner and

it's the time of year identities are being stolen and people are running scams. Of course it happens all year long, but we see an increase," he added.

He said people should be mindful of scams and alert law enforcement if something doesn't feel right. He said mail scams aren't the only crimes making rounds, and residents should be cautious of people wanting to do business over the phone and asking for personal information like bank account numbers and Social Security numbers.

Avens said he isn't sure how the scammers got the victim's information, but noted a lot of information is publicly available online and can be accessed by criminals.

"Any time someone gets mail that seems suspicious, we urge them to contact law enforcement," he said. "It may save them a lot of money and headaches down the road."

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SWEET: Shearin creating new jobs in Halifax County with Enfield business

FROM PAGE A1

approximately 200,000 bushels of sweet potatoes, and each bushel averages 50 pounds.

"Enfield Bins and Taters is also in the business of building potato bins or storage containers for the potatoes. To date, we have built over 7,000 bins/boxes," he said. "Since March, we have employed an average of 30 employees per week to build the bins, and I believe we can keep these employees year round."

Jobs are lacking in Enfield, Shearin said, but he's doing his part to change that, noting most of the new employees he has hired are from Enfield.

"Long term, we can take this potato industry to another level and do what we call packing and shipping and processing, and if you go into a store to buy a potato, it's ready to eat. We can do that, we can do the canned potatoes, we can do dog food," Shearin said. "(There are) so many things that can be done with a potato. It can be done right here in Halifax County."

Enfield Bins and Taters LLC will be joining an already

existing and expansive sweet potato industry in North Carolina. The state alone provides nearly half of the country's supply of the vegetable.

One person who has championed the economic viability of Enfield joining the sweet potato business, as well as the opening of Enfield Bins and Taters LLC, is Cathy Scott, executive director of the Halifax County Economic Development Commission.

"The value of the industry is important: (North Carolina) is No. 1 in sweet potato production and grows almost 50 percent of the U.S. crop representing a production value of \$354 million," Scott said. "There has been an 185-percent increase in sweet potato production in (North Carolina) since 2000."

Scott, along with others in her organization, is helping Shearin's business to support existing operations while still working toward the company's long-term growth opportunities. She noted some possible upgrades for Enfield Bins and Taters LLC include an expansion of bin production, expansion of the warehouse



Marvin Shearin II in one of the various storage rooms at Enfield Bins and Taters LLC on Tuesday afternoon. The facility contains four storage rooms, and it eventually will hold about 200,000 bushels of sweet potatoes.

and curing operations and more processing. Scott noted the building before Shearin renovated it was an eyesore.

Shearin is no stranger in providing jobs for Enfield. He already employed numerous people in Shearin Farms of Enfield since he began in 1977. His wife, Audrey Shearin, operates Eastern Petroleum

Corp., and employs 115 people as well.

But Shearin may need even more hands on deck as Enfield Bins and Taters LLC takes off.

"This will again be beneficial to the local economy through job creation. We own and lease land to grow potatoes, and one of our

major concerns at this point is finding enough acreage to grow the potatoes as they require three- to four-year rotation similar to peanuts," he said.

Shearin noted he's happy to restore the old building and finally put it back to use after 10 years of being untouched.

"Everyone will benefit from the tax base increase and jobs that we are providing to the Town of Enfield and Halifax County," he said. "Anytime that we can help somebody, we like helping people."

He thanked Scott, the Halifax County Economic Development Commission and the Town of Enfield for making his new facility a reality.

The facility is set to start operations in about two weeks. Eventually Shearin said he wants to see Enfield grow to become a large city like Charlotte.

"That would be nice, wouldn't it?" Shearin said, laughing.

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2 teens arrested in Weldon B&E cases

BY ERIN CARSON
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WELDON — Two teenagers, 18 and 15, were arrested for numerous breaking and enterings in Weldon this week and have been tied to other similar cases dating back to January, according to Weldon Deputy Police Chief James Avens.

The 18-year-old has been identified as Jeremy Motley. The 15-year-old's name was not released due to his age, Avens noted.

Avens said there were calls from residents about break-ins in the 100 block of E. Second Street and the 400 block of Cedar Street Monday afternoon. When police went to investigate, he said they

located Motley and the 15-year-old, who were wearing dark clothes and black backpacks.



Motley

that had happened in the area. Most of the stolen property from the recent break-ins was recovered, Avens added.

He said the teens operated by coming up to a house, knocking on the front door and waiting for an answer. If there was no answer, he said they would go to the back door and knock. After no response, he said they would break in

and steal items from the homes.

Motley was charged with two counts of breaking and entering, two counts of larceny after breaking and entering, two counts of possession of stolen goods, one count of attempted breaking and entering and one count of damage to property. He was given a \$5,000 bond and Nov. 4 court date.

Lt. Christopher Davis is the lead investigator on the case and will be

obtaining juvenile petitions for the 15-year-old involved in the cases, according to a statement from the Weldon Police Department.

Avens said more charges are expected for the pair after further investigation into the earlier break-ins from this year.

"Thank you to the citizen that called in the complaint," he added. "It takes us all working together to look after our neighborhoods."

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