

Outlaw defeats Ballenger in runoff

Incumbent loses seat on New Bern Board of Aldermen

BY COREY FRIEDMAN
THE INDEPENDENT REGISTER

Voters from New Bern's sixth ward elected Dana Outlaw to the city Board of Aldermen over incumbent William Ballenger in a runoff election Nov. 8.

Outlaw, a 51-year-old home inspector and real estate appraiser, took 53 percent of the 706 ballots

cast in the runoff, which brought 27 percent of registered voters in Ward 6 to the polls.

"I really love the city of New Bern, it's just a good amalgam of people in the area who have a lot of good ideas," Outlaw said. "There's quite a few things I'd like to accomplish as alderman. An alderman is part of a team,

and there are issues in the city that I'd like to work with that team on."

Outlaw complimented Ballenger on running what he called a clean, competitive race. For his part, the unseated alderman was gracious in defeat.

"I feel like I've accomplished a whole lot," Ballenger said. "We've had

a good working board, and we've made a lot of improvements. I'm sorry I won't be there to continue some of them, but I think Dana will do a good job."

Results are unofficial until the Craven County Board of Elections certifies the figures at its vote canvass, set for 11 a.m. Nov. 15.

Craven County Municipal Elections UNOFFICIAL RESULTS

New Bern Board of Aldermen Dana Outlaw	Havelock Mayor Jimmy A. Sanders Sr.
Bridgeton Mayor Rodman L. Williams	Havelock Board of Commissioners Will Lewis, Alan L. 'Big Al' Reid Sr.
Bridgeton Board of Aldermen Keith L. Tyndall, Charles D. Freeman, Mary Spano	River Bend Mayor John R. Kirkland
First Craven Sanitary District Eddie Rowe	River Bend Town Council Phil Seymour, Brenda D. Garvey, Charles T. Bodo, Irving 'Bud' Van Slyke, Charles W. Sharpe
Dover Mayor Alexander X. White	Trent Woods Mayor Don Day
Dover Board of Aldermen Doodle Arnette, John F. Galog Jr., Richard C. Giddings, Charles Taylor, John Percy Wetherington Jr.	T. Woods Board of Commissioners Shane Turney, Harry Lassiter, Ron Oliver

College is accused of censorship

Student says social dialogues silenced

BY COREY FRIEDMAN
THE INDEPENDENT REGISTER

A Craven Community College student said security personnel and the campus resource officer acted to suppress his right to free speech after receiving student complaints.

James P. Just and several friends who congregate outside the college's Student Center and often hold animated social and political discussions were told to pipe down when someone made a comment with racial overtones, Just said on Nov. 3.

"If the South won the Civil War, we would still have slavery," he said. "Apparently, we can't talk about war and slavery because someone got nailed for that."

Campus security officers and Cpl. Paul Branaman, a Craven County sheriff's deputy who serves as campus resource officer, have warned Just that his speech borders on disorderly conduct, according to Just and Branaman.

The group of students has also been warned not to use profanity, Just said.

"Someone complained about someone saying racist stuff," Just said. "Whatever we talk about out there is political and religious and educational."

The student, who maintains he has the right to express his opinions, is considering dropping out at Craven, due at least in part to his confrontations with campus law enforcement.

"I was going to do it anyway, but this definitely broke the camel's back," he said.

Branaman said he and campus security officers have received several complaints about abusive and racist language from Just and his acquaintances. He said the

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INDEPENDENT REGISTER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/COREY FRIEDMAN AND WILLIAM R. TOLER

November presents a novel approach for Scharbrough

BY COREY FRIEDMAN
THE INDEPENDENT REGISTER

TRENT WOODS — Too personal to publish.

That's how Jamie Scharbrough describes her third project for National Novel Writing Month, or NaNoWriMo in its participants' parlance.

For the month of November, Scharbrough and an estimated 40,000 aspiring authors worldwide will work daily to craft a 50,000-word, 175-page novella by month's end.

"It's been in my head for 12 years," she said, describing her

third NaNoWriMo project, a love story tentatively titled "Triad."

"I write for myself. I'm not necessarily interested in being a writer professionally."

Although she isn't planning to submit her manuscript to the rigors of literary agent and publisher revision, the 20-year-old writer and Craven Community College student will post portions of her work online, as many NaNoWriMo participants do.

Writing a novel is an imposing goal made attainable through daily word quotas. Scharbrough said it averages out to 1,667 words per

day, which takes her between one and two hours to write.

"The biggest part is discipline," she explained. "You have to sit down and write every single day. You fall behind all the time, that's like human nature. You just write a lot on the weekends and use the weekends to catch up."

NaNoWriMo is intended primarily for beginning writers, allowing them to gain the confidence that results from completing a full-length novella, or short novel.

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Resident is cleared to drive taxi

STAFF REPORTS
THE INDEPENDENT REGISTER

A New Bern resident received tentative clearance from city officials to drive a taxicab within city limits Nov. 8 after appearing before the city Board of Aldermen three consecutive times.

Otis Turnage Sr., who said his taxicab license was revoked when he was charged as an accessory to murder — a charge that was later dismissed — received permission from the New Bern Police Department to drive a taxi as long as new charges were not added to his criminal record.

Chief of Police Frank Palombo initially denied Turnage's application for a taxi permit on grounds of bad character, in accordance with a city statute. Palombo cited Turnage's "extensive" criminal record at the Oct. 25 Board of Aldermen meeting.

"I'm concerned about the citizens of New Bern having a taxicab driver with a propensity for violence," he said at the time.

Turnage countered that he has been rehabilitated and said several charges appearing on his criminal record resulted from confusion over crimes of which his son, Otis Turnage Jr., had been accused.

"I have been accused of a lot of things, but it was my son," Turnage said Oct. 25. "I have done some things wrong, and I have already paid my debt to society."

Turnage was charged with accessory to murder after a passenger in his cab shot and killed a New Bern man and held Turnage hostage at gunpoint, he said.

Without intervention from city aldermen, the police department approved Turnage's application under the condition that new charges do not appear on his record.

The Board of Aldermen on Nov. 8 also voted to annex the Sandy Point area, bringing it under New Bern's jurisdiction.



INDEPENDENT REGISTER/WILLIAM R. TOLER

Marching along

The band from West Johnston High School in Benson performs at the fifth annual Crystal Coast Band Classic, hosted by Havelock High School's Marching Rams. West Johnston was named grand champion for the 3A - 5A division.

Police raid first known meth lab in New Bern

BY COREY FRIEDMAN
THE INDEPENDENT REGISTER

New Bern police on Oct. 26 made the first discovery of a methamphetamine lab within city limits, arresting a 31-year-old woman and charging her with six drug-related crimes.

Ongoing surveillance of Lot 213 in the Beech Grove Mobile Home Park led police narcotics detectives to follow Rachael Stuart when she left the residence in a vehicle bound for Neuse Boulevard, authorities said.

Detectives pulled Stuart over for "numerous traffic violations" and found that her driver license was revoked, according to police spokesman Chris Stansbury.

A search upon arrest turned up methamphetamines, and a subsequent search of her residence revealed an active meth lab.

Stuart was charged with one count each of manufacturing methamphetamine, possession with intent to sell and deliver methamphetamine, possession of immediate precursors for methamphetamine production, possession of marijuana, possession of



Stuart

drug paraphernalia, maintaining a dwelling for the purpose of a controlled substance and driving while license revoked.

Stuart was held in Craven County Jail under a \$100,000 secured bond with her first appearance in district court scheduled for Oct. 27, according to a police department news release.

The New Bern Police Department notified the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation, which dispatched a clean-up team to comb the residence on Oct. 27.

Police said this is the first incident of a meth lab bust in New Bern.

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Local & State

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News Briefs

'Amy Day' benefit is scheduled

An outdoor festival to raise funds for cystic fibrosis patient Amy Holliday's lung transplant is scheduled from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 12 at The Courtyards at Berne Village on Amhurst Boulevard.

"Amy Day" will include games for adults and children, live music, a bake sale, silent auction and pig pickin'. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$7 for children 12 and under and free for children under 3.

For more information on Holliday's transplant fund or to donate online, visit the Children's Organ Transplant Association Web site at www.cota.org. Make checks payable to "COTA for Amy H."

Accident reports are now online

Automobile accident reports are now available for public inspection on the New Bern Police Department's Web site, the department announced Nov. 2.

Reports will usually be available within 72 hours of the collision and can be accessed for one year afterwards. Reports are available at www.newbernpd.org. In order to access a report, you must know the accident number, the date it occurred, the name of a person involved in the accident or the location of the accident.

Records of collisions occurring more than a year ago are available from the Traffic Records Section of the state Division of Motor Vehicles.

The NBPd thanked the Kellum Law Firm for making a contribution to help provide the service to city residents.

City's first black police officer dies

The first African-American to serve in the New Bern Police Department died on Oct. 23 at the age of 75.

New Bern police mourned the loss of Robert Lee Patrick Sr., a patrol officer credited with solving a homicide case, by wearing a black band across their badges through Oct. 30.

Patrick was employed by the police department from 1959 to 1960 and was the first black officer to serve in the city of New Bern. After leaving the department, Patrick remained in the Craven County area, where he worked in the private sector.

The officer was honored with a photo on display at police headquarters on George Street since the new facility opened in 1999, police said.

Briefs are compiled from *Independent Register* staff reports. To submit information for this space, e-mail news@indieregister.com.

Two nabbed in armed robbery

Pizza delivery man helped identify suspects, also worked for Sheriff's Office

BY COREY FRIEDMAN
THE INDEPENDENT REGISTER

Two Craven County men were arrested Oct. 26 in connection with the armed robbery of a pizza delivery man who also worked as a county sheriff's deputy, authorities said.

New Bern police arrested Lanny Becton, 16, of 194 Trent Court Apartments, and Randall Canady, 19, of 1520 Up Creek Road in Cove City, charging both with one count of armed robbery.

A Pizza Hut delivery man also employed by the Craven

County Sheriff's Office was flagged down by two men while searching for 184 Pleasant Hill Road shortly after 9 p.m., police said.

The delivery man, whose name was not released, handed the pizzas to one of the two subjects and turned back toward his car. One of the men pulled a handgun and demanded money, according to police, as three other people approached the vehicle from the rear.

After the victim complied, handing over an undisclosed amount of

company money, the men demanded his wallet. One man reached into the delivery driver's rear pocket to seize his wallet, but instead, pulled out his sheriff's office identification, according to police reports.

The suspects instructed the driver to hand over his

keys and return to his car before fleeing on foot.

The victim accompanied New Bern police on a search for suspects and at 10:06 p.m., identified Becton and Canady as two of the men involved in the robbery.

Becton and Canady were given a \$100,000 secured

bond and were scheduled to appear in Craven County District Court on Oct. 27.

Becton had been released on bond for his involvement in the Sept. 21 robbery of Clothing Explosions on Glenburnie Road.

Police said the investigation is ongoing and additional arrests are pending.

Contact Corey Friedman at 633-2757 or at corey@indieregister.com.



Becton



Canady



INDEPENDENT REGISTER/WILLIAM R. TOLER

Frightful fun

Children fan out across Union Point Park on Oct. 31 in search of Halloween candy at the conclusion of the annual Parade of Preschoolers, presented by the New Bern Recreation and Parks Department and the Craven County Cooperative Extension. The event drew hundreds of children and parents for a 9:30 a.m. parade down Broad Street.

Mother, daughter are arrested for drug use

Drugs siezed include cocaine and marijuana

STAFF REPORTS
THE INDEPENDENT REGISTER

A mother and daughter in the Craven Terrace Apartments complex were arrested on drug-related charges Oct. 24, according to the New Bern Police Department.

Acting on a search warrant, police narcotics detectives and the Special Response Team raided Apartment 266, Building G2 of Craven Terrace Apartments, where police recovered 40.9 grams of cocaine, 110 grams of marijuana, five Oxycodone pills, five Lorazepam pills, \$120 in cash and a sawed-off shotgun.

Police arrested Carolyn Hall, 34, and daughter Mariah Ward, 16, of the apartment, on felony drug charges that include trafficking cocaine.

Hall was charged with a count each of

trafficking cocaine, possession with intent to sell and deliver marijuana, possession of weapon of mass destruction (sawed-off shotgun), maintaining a dwelling for the purpose of controlled substances and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Her bond was set at \$250,000, with a scheduled appearance in district court set for Oct. 25.

Ward was charged with trafficking cocaine, possession with intent to sell and deliver marijuana,

possession of weapon of mass destruction (sawed-off shotgun) and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Ward was held on a \$150,000 secured bond, with her first court appearance scheduled Oct. 25.

Additional arrests and charges are possible as police continue their investigation.

The police department's SRT unit assisted detectives serving the warrant due to the possible presence of weapons inside the apartment, police said.



Hall



Ward

County nixes relief request

Cove City resident claims he never received his tax notice

BY COREY FRIEDMAN
THE INDEPENDENT REGISTER

Jeremy Johnson didn't know that he owed back taxes on his deceased great-grandmother's property until he received a civil summons in the mail initiating foreclosure proceedings.

Despite his insistence that he wasn't properly notified of taxes owed while ownership of the property was in transition, the 22-year-old Cove City man will still have to pay a settlement cost more than six times the outstanding tax balance, Craven County commissioners decided on Nov. 7.

Johnson owed about \$157 in back taxes, but will incur a settlement cost of \$953 to avoid foreclosure of the property, according to Jennifer Knight, who spoke

to the county commissioners on Johnson's behalf.

The settlement cost includes attorney's fees for filing the foreclosure suit in civil court.

"If a certified letter had been sent, Jeremy would have received it," Knight said. "The family would have then taken care of the taxes."

Knight explained that the property taxes were initially paid by Johnson's great-grandmother, who died on Feb. 8, although Johnson received the property through a deed of gift 11 years ago. She said the tax notice was not addressed to Johnson, and he received no notification of the back taxes owed until a civil summons arrived.

Continued on Page A4

Coat drive seeks to help foster children

STAFF REPORTS
THE INDEPENDENT REGISTER

A New Bern chiropractor's office is collecting new winter coats for distribution to local foster children.

Flemming Chiropractic Health & Wellness Center is accepting donations for its 10th annual Coats for Kids drive, which will benefit children in the Craven County Department of Social Services foster care system.

"Our patients know that it's going to go to a child in this area who would appreciate having something new for

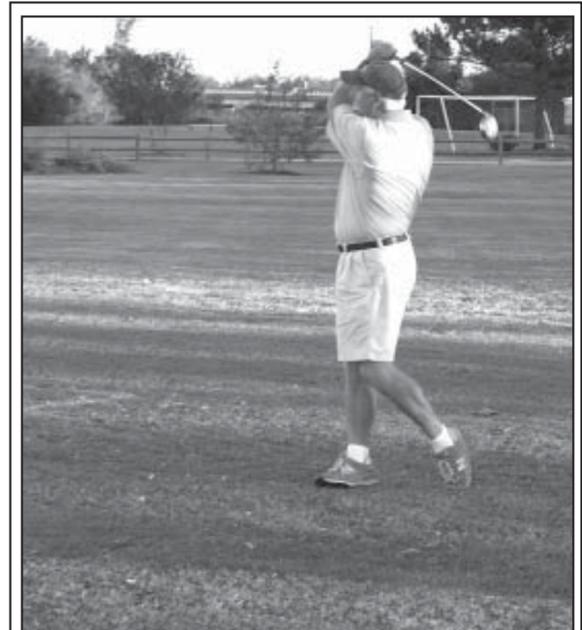
Christmas," said Kelli Bailey of the Flemming Chiropractic staff.

Coats for Kids donors can bring new winter coats to the Flemming Chiropractic office at 3601 Trent Road until Dec. 16, Bailey said.

Each year, the foster care system provides organizers with a list of children requesting winter coats and their coat sizes. Placards bearing requested coat sizes hang on the Coats for Kids wall in the office.

Flemming Chiropractic began collecting coats in

Continued on Page A4



INDEPENDENT REGISTER/COREY FRIEDMAN

Afternoon tee

New Bern resident Bill Jones practices his swing at Lawson Creek Park on a warm Monday afternoon Nov. 7.

Opinion

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Editorials

Speak no evil

CCC muzzles student over racial comment

Students at Craven Community College can say whatever they want — as long as their words don't fall on the delicate ears of someone who happens to disagree.

That's the misguided and unfortunate message that campus resource officer Cpl. Paul Branaman seemed to send last week, when he equated the expression of an unpopular and incendiary viewpoint with disorderly conduct, a criminal offense.

Branaman, a sworn Craven County sheriff's deputy, warned CCC student James P. Just that his comments could land him in the pokey — an assertion that, unchallenged, could have a chilling effect on student speech at the 3,000-student community college.

Just and a group of friends who congregate outside the college's Student Center building often hold animated social and political discussions.

Some of the viewpoints expressed are extreme, to say the least. Just admits that at least one member of the group has made comments he considers racist.

A campus security officer overheard one such remark, to which he took offense. He could have chosen to respond with his own views — or grit his teeth, walk away and leave a student debate to the students — but he instead decided to warn the group that its antics had reached an intolerable level.

Branaman and campus security officers interpret a state statute banning

disorderly conduct to include any speech that offends or provokes anger. The deputy even said on Nov. 3 that "people have a right to be free from offense."

If that's true, it's news to us, and to the civil liberties watchdogs at the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, who explained that no law can squelch expression protected by the First Amendment, which courts consistently interpret to shield even the most objectionable and outrageous speech.

CCC is running roughshod on students' expressive rights in the name of civility. College President Scott Ralls curtsied to the First Amendment in his Nov. 4 remarks, but admitted that the institution discourages speech that is racially or otherwise discriminatory.

Here's the problem, and it's a doozy — Dr. Ralls, Cpl. Branaman, you may need to sit down for this one — Americans have a constitutional right to express racist, sexist, narrow-minded and boorish opinions.

That's all adult Americans — even Craven Community College students.

"Polite, agreeable, popular speech doesn't need a separate amendment to protect it," Greg Lukianoff, director of legal and public advocacy for FIRE, told us on Nov. 4. "We need the First Amendment in order to protect speech that can anger or provoke."

We agree wholeheartedly. James Just's rights have been violated, and he deserves a prompt and sincere apology from CCC administrators.

A step forward

Police department boosts access to records

The New Bern Police Department took an important step this month in making public records more accessible by posting automobile accident reports online.

Reports are now available through a link on the police department's Web site within 72 hours of the collision, which will save citizens a trip to the police station and allow anyone with Internet access to retrieve and view the reports.

"Prior to this program's launching, people were forced to stop at the police department and pick up a copy of the accident report," reads a police department news release signed by Chief of Police Frank Palombo. "Those days are now over. A simple click of the mouse, and that police accident report is available from any computer in the world."

In opening its files to the world, the NBPD recognizes its accountability to the public and responsibility to furnish citizens with timely and accurate information.

We applaud the police department for seeking innovative ways to streamline the release of information to the public, and we hope citizens take advantage of this online record search.

The police department also credited the Kellum Law Firm for its contributions to this new public service.

This initiative may hasten the long overdue process of posting all law enforcement records — including arrest reports — and court documents online. Police, sheriff and government agencies across North Carolina should take notice.

What do YOU think?

Letters to the editor are accepted for publication in this space each issue. Letters should be 350 words or fewer and should contain the author's name and telephone number for verification purposes.

Mail letters to the Independent Register, 1734 Elmwood Street New Bern, NC 28560, fax them to (252) 636-0616 or e-mail them to letters@indieregister.com.

Vox Populi

ACT swindles the taxpayers

To the Editor:

According to reports, Allies for Cherry Point's Tomorrow will be asking for operating money from Craven, Pamlico and Carteret counties and from cities within these counties.

Last year the state of North Carolina gave ACT \$150,000 in a big ceremony at the Havelock Tourist and Events Center. The current state budget allows for \$1 million to be given to ACT. Last year, Havelock, New Bern, Craven County and others gave money to ACT.

This is your money that the government has plundered from you.

They tell us that they want the money to save Cherry Point. All they want to do is save the 6,000 civilian jobs that are on Cherry Point. Why don't they go to the civilians on Cherry Point and pass the hat?

Let me remind everyone that military bases are for the defense of the country and not for jobs for the local community.

Everyone who is reading this letter has given to ACT,

whether you wanted to or not.

To paraphrase Walter Williams, "a thief is more moral than the Allies for Cherry Point's Tomorrow; when a thief steals your money, he doesn't demand you thank him."

I would like — no, demand — to see a financial statement accounting for every tax dollar that ACT has received and spent over the years.

Richard Evey
Havelock

Firearm rights are inherent

To the Editor:

Black's Law Dictionary defines a right as "the power of...free action." Rights are "inherent" and cannot be extracted from a person. A right is something that you can exercise without permission. A privilege is when you need permission to do something.

Rights and privilege are opposites.

Rights are derived from property. Every right implies responsibility and the only limitation on those rights is the equal rights of others.

Rights and responsibilities are inseparable. I have a right to carry a firearm, but I also have the responsibility to use that weapon wisely. The American public has grown weary of their right of responsibility.

The United States Constitution grants no

rights, the U.S. Constitution guarantees your rights, and the only rights that exist are individual rights.

The Bill of Rights states that we have a right to keep and bear arms. Why must I get a permit from the government to carry a weapon? I will never accept permission from the government to exercise any right. My rights are not negotiable.

The Second Amendment of the Bill of Rights is just as non-negotiable as any other amendment. When was the last time that you got a permit from the government to go to church, make a statement in public or write a letter to the press?

You only need to defend the rights that you want to keep.

So, I ask you again: is concealed carry a right or a privilege?

It is a right, granted to me by the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Because under Marbury v Madison, 1803: the U.S. Supreme Court ruled "that a law repugnant to the Constitution is void, and that courts, as well as other departments, are bound by that instrument."

I am not a lawyer, I am not wealthy, I am not politically connected; I am a person with rights granted to me by my creator and guaranteed to me by the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Thomas Jefferson tells us: "you only have rights that you are willing to fight for or are willing to die for." Freedom is not free.

I have drawn a line in the sand. Will you?

Richard Evey
Havelock

Spunky Diablo's Laundromat

America passes on stunted democracy

Welcome back to Spunky Diablo's Laundromat. Come sit over here with me beside Laundry Unit 3. Get yourself a beer. No, no, put your wallet away — neither your money nor your ID is any good here.

Look. See that corpulent bastard dumping what appears to be a bushelf of dookie-stained Fruit of the Looms into Unit 6? Yeah, the one picking lint out of his navel. His name is America, and he is supposed by many the world over to be a bastion of democracy.

But we know better, don't we?

That fat lout called America knows nothing about democracy. In fact, he has only 229 years' experience in the democracy experiment. Folks, in the grand scheme of things that ain't doodley-squat. Rome lasted about five times that. The truth is, we haven't dabbled in democracy long enough to know that it works well in the long run. And yet, we want to establish it globally.

Democracy literally means "rule by the people," but the sad fact is that the sprawling urban gulag that is America is governed not by the people, but by a mere

two political parties, both of which consist mainly of shortsighted morons.

Two parties. How's that for choice, boys and girls? How's that for rule by the people?

If you're anything like me, the only thing you have any rule over is whether you pay your tax liability with a personal check or credit card.

But here's where the irony gets positively gorgeous. That bloated shlemiel dumping his soiled undies into Unit 6 over there is currently running loose like a wolf through Iraq, showing those A-rabs and Turds ('scuse me, I meant Kurds) just how democracy is done. Hoo-rah.

How does one advise another on something one barely knows oneself?

Poorly, that's how. So...what will be the result of our brothers' and

sons' and daughters' sacrifices in Iraq?

The Iraqi people (a phrase now grown well-nigh detestable, our potzer president uses it so much) will finally have access to plastic surgery. The best part about it is that there will be no need for the women to cover their cosmetic modifications with headscarves — because there will be no headscarves.

In fact, the once-humble, once-godly Iraqi female will now be free to be as vain and as strumpetish as her democratically enriched American counterpart.

And the men will finally have football! Not that wussy crap the Brits call football either, but real American football, played on an honest-to-goodness regulation gridiron, and with an inflated camel bladder serving as The Ball.

And there will be porn. Arabic porn. In copious quantities.

Finally. I don't know about you, but I've been waiting forever for *Bari'ah Does Babylon VII*. Let's hear it for democracy.

Contact Stephen Lewis at stephen@indieregister.com.

Independent Register

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Operating Structure and Standard Protocol

Letters to the Editor Policy

The *Independent Register* accepts editorial submissions and letters to the editor for publication. All submissions become property of the *Independent Register* upon receipt.

Letters to the editor should be no longer than 350 words. Letters must be signed and must include the author's address and telephone number for verification purposes.

The *Independent Register* does not accept anonymous letters, open letters or letters to a third party. The *Independent Register* reserves the right to reject submissions and will edit all submissions for spelling, grammar, clarity, accuracy and Associated Press style.

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County commission denies tax request

Continued from Page A2

She said the situation would have been resolved had the county sent a letter detailing the outstanding tax balance via certified mail.

"If they're going to cancel my insurance policy, they send me a certified letter. That was not done here," Knight said. "It seems extreme measures were taken before simple measures were taken."

While sympathetic, county commissioners voted unanimously to deny Johnson's request for relief of the \$953 debt, pointing out that it is the taxpayers' responsibility to make prompt payment whether or not they receive an invoice.

"These fees are going to have to be paid, either by Mr. Johnson or by the county taxpayers," said Board of Commissioners Chairman George Brown. "I think procedure was followed."

Commissioner Lee K. Allen feared that making an exception for Johnson would open the floodgates to delinquent taxpayers seeking relief or exemption.

"I think we would be setting a terrible precedent

to grant this request," he said. "If we grant this request, I think we will have people lining up down the street to ask for the same thing."

County commissioners also approved a \$33,333 subsidy for solid waste haulers to augment payment received from the sale of garbage stickers. The request was made on behalf of several sanitation companies whose owners say rising fuel prices are making a mess of their bottom line.

Reginald Hargett, president of Hargett Engineering & Sanitation Services, said the price of diesel gasoline has risen nearly 100 percent since the company entered into its contract with Craven County.

He said the garbage sticker program only draws between 35 and 40 percent participation countywide, and sanitation companies take home about \$1.82 per \$2 sticker collected.

"There's a lot of rural routes out there, and this system is based on participation," Hargett said. "We can ride around all day and only pick up 50 or 60 stickers."

Coats for Kids drive set through Dec. 16

Continued from Page A2

1995, with contributions benefiting the Coastal Women's Shelter. Organizers began distributing coats to the county foster care system in 1997.

To date, Coats for Kids has provided 559 winter coats as Christmas gifts for

local foster children and has received additional cash donations of \$2,725 for hats, scarves, mittens and toys.

For more information on the Coats for Kids drive, contact Flemming Chiropractic at (252) 638-6062.

CCC student told comments could be disorderly conduct

Continued from Page A1

group also has littered outside the Student Center building, which Just denies.

He and security officers have received at least 20 reports against Just and other students with whom he associates for, among other things, ridiculing disabled and exceptional education students.

"They are making social comments in an area where there are other people who would not appreciate their social comments," Branaman said. "They're saying things that are likely to evoke a response, and that's disorderly conduct in the eyes of the law."

Branaman recognized students' right to express controversial opinions, but also said "people have a right to be free from offense."

He said the comments made about slavery were

racist in nature and were overheard by Lee Gardner, an African-American campus security officer who took offense to the conversation.

Just claims the comment about slavery was taken out of context, and the speaker merely expressed an opinion about the course America would have taken had the Confederates won the Civil War.

"This immature behavior, it's got to stop," Branaman said. "The state of North Carolina has enacted laws for the benefit of all people. Those laws will be firmly, fairly and impartially enforced here."

Free speech experts say the expression of an offensive thought or idea should not be punished as disorderly conduct. Greg Lukianoff, director of legal and public advocacy for the

Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, said

disorderly conduct laws cannot trump the First Amendment.

"We've seen a lot of cases of abuse of disorderly conduct," Lukianoff said. "It is being used to punish clearly protected speech. Disorderly conduct does not happen any time someone hurts your feelings. No matter how you try to reshape or rename a legal technique to silence protected speech, it's still illegitimate."

Philadelphia-based FIRE is a nonpartisan group that represents college students whose expressive rights have been violated, according to the organization's Web site.

Lukianoff said the First Amendment was designed to shield extreme and offensive opinions from state suppression.

"Polite, agreeable, popular speech doesn't need a separate amendment to protect it," he said. "We

need the First Amendment in order to protect speech that can anger or provoke."

College President Scott Ralls said students should be free to express their opinions, but questioned the manner in which Just and his acquaintances were doing so.

"We support student free expression, [but] we obviously don't support any form of outward racial or any other types of discrimination in that regard," he said on Nov. 4.

Ralls said campus regulations prohibit name-calling and harassment of a racial or sexual nature. He expressed hope that social and political discourse on campus could remain civil.

"We hope that everybody here behaves toward others in a civil manner," he said. "I doubt that anybody's in favor of saying that somebody cannot speak freely about their own opinions."

Scharbrough takes NaNoWriMo challenge

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Scharbrough knows the feeling of accomplishment well — she's completed two NaNoWriMo novels and worked on four other novel projects independently.

"There is a major feeling of accomplishment," she said. "It gives you a huge boost of self-esteem because it involves your intelligence and ability to write. You say 'Hey, if I can write a novel in a month, I can do anything.'"

Successful NaNoWriMo novelists celebrate with "Thank God It's Over" parties, held worldwide after the last keys have been struck and the final word count reaches or exceeds the 50,000-word mark.

"You go and you kick back and have champagne or wine and you just unwind," Scharbrough said.

But writers don't shelve their unrefined manuscripts for good.

Many gear up to participate in National Novel Editing Month — or NaNoEdMo — the following March.

Her first NaNoWriMo novel, written in November 2003, is called "The Goddess Assassin," a spy thriller whose murder-for-hire protagonist leaves a Greek goddess medallion beside each of her victims.

The second, "Sarah, Sereai," is a coming-of-age story loosely based on personalities Scharbrough grew up around.

"When I'm angry or upset, I go and I write. I get everything out, and it really, really helps," she said. "Or if I'm happy, I need to write to remember the occasion."

Writing came naturally for Scharbrough, who remembers first receiving praise for her mastery of words at the age of 6, when a poem she wrote earned her first-grade teacher's favor.

"She loved that poem so much she put it on the wall and gave me two super stamps," Scharbrough remembered.

As an aspiring religion professor, she knows her words must someday find their way into print in order to meet academia's standards for scholarly publication. She said she may revise and publish her first NaNoWriMo novel, which is less personal than her other writings.

Until then, Scharbrough will keep writing when inspiration strikes, a process she describes as "getting it out of my head and onto paper, so it won't bother me."

Editor's note: Jamie Scharbrough is a frequent contributor to the Independent Register.

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