



# WOODS' FIRST HAT TRICK PUSHES COSBY TO VICTORY

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# The Newport Plain Talk

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COCKE COUNTY'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1900

## Man charged with first-degree murder in Monday shooting

### STAFF REPORTS

**DEL RIO**—The Cocke County Sheriff's Office arrested James Dennard Raspberry, age 65, at 1:02 a.m. on September 14.

Raspberry was charged with First-Degree Murder, three counts of aggravated assault and three counts of Reckless Endangerment with a Deadly Weapon.

The arrest was made after Raspberry was allegedly involved in a shooting near Crane Way in Del Rio Monday afternoon.

SEE MURDER, PAGE 4A



CCSO

Several bags of suspected Methamphetamine were seized during a CCSO traffic stop in Newport. The driver of the vehicle, Eric Ballard, faces multiple drug charges.

## Meth seized during traffic stop; driver facing charges

**NEWPORT**—Deputy Blake Cupp conducted a traffic stop on a car due to the registration not matching the vehicle. The car came to a stop at the intersection of Jasmine Drive and Industrial Road.

Cupp came into contact with the driver, Eric Ballard, age 54, Newport. The report states that Ballard was reaching in the back seat, so Cupp advised him to step out of the vehicle.

Ballard was placed into handcuffs while something was still in his hand. Cupp told Ballard to drop the item and a bag of clear rock substance believed to be Methamphetamine fell to the ground.

Ballard was being placed into the back seat of the patrol vehicle when he slipped a handcuff and attempted to flee on foot. Ballard was advised to stop or he would be tased, but he reportedly ignored verbal commands and continued to run on foot.

SEE METH, PAGE 4A

# Sheriff's Office holds 9/11 remembrance ceremony

BY MATT WINTER  
NPT ASSISTANT EDITOR

**NEWPORT**—The Cocke County Sheriff's Office recently held a 9/11-remembrance ceremony to honor 20 years since the tragic events of that day.

Members of the Newport Fire Department participated in the event that honored all of the lives lost during the four coordinated terrorist attacks on our country.

Guest speaker for the event was Chief Raymond Rodriguez, Navy veteran and NJROTC Naval Science Instructor for Cocke County High School.

Rodriguez described the events of that day that changed the lives of every American.

"On September 11, 2001 we had 2,977 victims who died, and among those victims we had 412 that were first responders. The attacks were the deadliest terrorist attacks on American soil in U.S. history," Rodriguez said.

"The attacks against New York City and Washington, DC caused death and destruction, which triggered an effort to combat terrorism for many years to come. For all Americans, the phrase 9/11 will evoke a special meaning, a moment in history when the world as we knew it changed forever. It's fitting that every year on September 11 Americans join together to honor the memory of those who died that day."

Rodriguez said that Americans learned a significant amount about themselves that day when they faced the most extreme and unimaginable circumstances. Ordinary humans reacted with extraordinary heroism that has continued long after the attacks of that day.

"We saw ordinary people choose duty in the face of death as security guards in the World Trade Center continued to help individuals out even as the building was collapsing around them. We say loyalty to friends overwhelm

SEE CEREMONY, PAGE 4A



MATT WINTER

Members of the Newport Fire Department slowly unfurled the American Flag during the 9/11 ceremony as it was displayed from a ladder truck high above the courthouse lawn.

## Lack of hospital space delays First Call's response times

BY MATT WINTER  
NPT ASSISTANT EDITOR

**COCKE COUNTY**—COVID-19 has put major stress on all facets of the local medical system including First Call Ambulance Service. First Call has handled COVID transfers on top of regular medical calls throughout the pandemic.

Lindsay Ellison, First Call General Manager, said the service is currently

in need of ambulance drivers.

She spoke to members of the Public Safety Committee about the issue Monday evening.

"Staffing has been a huge issue nationwide, but we have been very fortunate until now," Ellison said. "We are not losing employees, they are just tied up on calls waiting at the hospital."

Ellison said the lack of bed space at hospitals across the state has led

to long wait times for patients facing routine and even serious medical issues.

She said that Newport Medical recently had 16 beds available, but 19 patients were brought in for treatment.

"We are doing the best we can every day, but I've never seen anything like it. From Friday to Monday we ran

SEE RESPONSE, PAGE 4A

## County's active COVID cases still over 500

### STAFF REPORTS

**COCKE COUNTY**—Halfway through September, the county is still affected by over 500 active COVID-19 cases. A total of 25 new cases were reported on September 13 alone.

In the last seven days, 334 new cases have been reported to the state.

Over those seven days, the county has conducted an average of 115.6 COVID-19 tests per day with a 26.5%

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## Wheel tax option could appear on May 2022 ballot

BY MATT WINTER  
NPT ASSISTANT EDITOR

**COCKE COUNTY**—Budget Committee members met Monday afternoon to continue their discussions on funding options for a county jail/justice center.

The committee hopes to make a move in the near future before an entirely new County Legislative Body (CLB) may be elected in 2022.

With options limited to a wheel tax, property tax increase or budget cuts, the committee feels as if the public

should have a say in what measures are taken.

Committee member and CLB chair Clay Blazer said the work to put a wheel tax on the May ballot needs to be done in the coming months.

"It's September now and by this time next year we may have 14 new CLB members. Anything we do now can be undone so that's something we need to consider," Blazer said.

"There is no guarantee of a continuum so the work needs to be done now. I don't want to see a wheel tax, but if we are considering it then it

should be on the ballot for all citizens to decide."

The construction costs for the new facility are estimated at \$35,996,405. The total bond would be for \$40 million to cover all equipment and miscellaneous items needed to move Circuit and Sessions Courts into the new center.

The county would be responsible for a \$2.5 million annual payment on the new facility.

A wheel tax of various amounts

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