

HYDE COUNTY *news*

Summer help



OCRACOCKE BOYS William O'Neal (left), C.J. Wynn and Brandon O'Neal (not pictured) help out at the Ocracoke Fish House by heading shrimp, making boxes, cleaning fish and keeping the place clean. The Ocracoke Fish House is the island's last link to a heritage in commercial fishing and serves as the center of an ongoing local effort to preserve the dying industry. Under the Ocracoke Foundation, the fish house will benefit from a grant from the Golden LEAF Foundation for renovations. (R. Payne photo, courtesy Ocracoke Foundation)

Hyde gets portion of tobacco settlement

By MEGAN S. SHAW

Hyde County was the recipient of more than \$1.7 million for projects that will promote health care, economic development and community needs within the county, states a release from Patricia Cabe, vice president of programs at the Golden LEAF foundation.

The Golden LEAF Foundation is a nonprofit organization that receives one-half of the state's funds from a 1998 settlement with cigarette manufacturers. These grant monies place emphasis on providing assistance to "economically-distressed or tobacco-dependent communities" throughout the state.

Since its start in 1999, the foundation has awarded 681 grants worth more than \$351 million, according to Cabe.

"We enjoyed putting our boots on the ground in Hyde County and getting to know its people and communities better," said Cabe, "and we look forward to our continued work together as we bring the Community Assistance Initiative back for future cycles."

What Hyde planner Alice Keeney calls one of "the most beneficial project in Hyde," the Engelhard Medical Center (EMC) received the largest portion of the funding — \$555,000 — for construction and equipment costs for a new medical center.

Keeney explained that it's important for citizens in the county to have immediate access to comprehensive emergency care. In 2005, the non-profit Engelhard Medical Center Inc., was formed in response to the county's only medical provider retiring.

Presently, the EMC is the only medical facility in the county and is located in a 1736 square foot doublewide trailer. The operation has more than outgrown their facilities and is bursting at the seams with patient case loads, it was noted. The expansion into the new building will allow professionals to provide adequate service to those in need of medical treatment.

Also awarded to the county was \$417,000 towards the expand the Mattamuskeet Lodge sewer system to the wastewater lagoon in Engelhard. The funding will also provide for necessary repairs to the current sewer system in Engelhard.

Another Engelhard project, the expansion of Wanchese Seafood Industrial park, promises to provide jobs that will preserve the county's fishing and maritime heritage, said Keeney.

Across the Pamlico Sound, the Wanchese Seafood Industrial Park is bustling with marine-related business, including boat building, mechanical services, welding and commercial fishing. The park can afford no more space for and currently turns away a considerable number of prospective business tenants. An extension of the seafood park in Engelhard, 45 minutes away from Wanchese, will serve as a referral to businesses being turned away, and supply the local economy with jobs.

Also to support jobs based on the county's fishing heritage is the Ocracoke Fish House, which was awarded \$407,710 by Golden LEAF for renovations and equipment. The fish house is the island's last link to perhaps their most valuable resource — fishing.

The project is managed by the non-profit Ocracoke Foundation — a 501(c)3 — and also includes further development of Ocracoke, Fresh, a long-term oyster restoration plan, as well as educational opportunity.

Robin Payne, with the Ocracoke Foundation says that the funding will assist in upgrading, restoration and marketing of the project.

Presently, she explained, production capabilities are limited at the small fish house. By upgrading the facilities — installing new equipment, adding a higher capacity ice machine and bringing in more fresh seafood for sale, — fishermen can increase their income and additional jobs can be created.

Another project that will support jobs in Hyde is the Davis High Venture Corporation's incubator kitchen. The community center was awarded \$70,000 to complete the outlay of a kitchen that will be used for community and small business incubator functions.

The commercial-grade kitchen, said director Mike Adams, will be available for cottage bakery businesses and catering groups. Also, the center will be capable of being used for functions, such as weddings, with catering facilities and a banquet hall on-site.

Another vision for the project, said Adams, is to partner with the Hyde County Community Development Corporation and provide community training, utilizing the space as a classroom for culinary certification. Presently, Adams is in the process of pricing equipment for the

See PORTION, Page 12B

THE COASTLAND TIMES,

Tuesday, July 29, 2008, Page 14A