

Fire destroys high school

Webster, Foriest vie for state Senate



Peter Schumacher / Times-News

Firefighters from Guilford and Alamance counties work Wednesday on the flames engulfing Eastern Guilford High School. Emergency crews were dispatched to the blaze at 2:25 p.m. Authorities believe it may have started in an empty classroom. The school did not have a sprinkler system.

No one from the school was injured in the blaze

By Hannah Winkler
Times-News

GIBSONVILLE — Major portions of Eastern Guilford High School were destroyed Wednesday in a fire that apparently began in an empty classroom.

As of press time early this morning, the building was still burning and officials were still trying to assess the extent of the damage.

Yellow and black billowing smoke and flames could be seen from the school for miles all afternoon and into the night as emergency crews worked.

Authorities have confirmed that one of the front walls collapsed with


video
on the
WEB
See firefighters in action at
TheTimesNews.com

the potential for further collapses. About 1,060 students attend the school off Peeden Drive in Gibsonville. They, along with teachers and other school employees, were safely evacuated Wednesday to Bethel Presbyterian Church, at 300 Knox Road.

Emergency crews were dispatched to the school at 2:25 p.m.

The cause of the fire is still unknown, although there are reports the fire started in a classroom trash can.

According to Guilford County Sheriff's Department Lt. Robert Elliot, a school teacher noticed smoke pouring from a science lab

“I can't imagine it won't be a total loss, just in looking at it.”

Anthony Scales
Guilford County Schools safety coordinator

classroom around lunchtime and tried to put out the fire with an extinguisher.

No one was in the classroom when the fire started. There are no reports on whether the chemicals in the lab contributed to the fire.

Fifteen-year-old Dianne Oney was in the middle of Latin class when the fire alarm went off.

“We saw thick white smoke coming from behind the school,” Oney said. “After the first big billow of smoke, we saw flames coming out of the

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Counseling available

Counseling will be available today for Eastern Guilford High School students, staff and parents. Guilford County Schools will provide free counseling from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the following locations:

■ McLeansville Baptist Church, 5205 Frieden Church Road, in McLeansville, 336-697-8121

■ First Baptist Church, 221 Piedmont Ave., Gibsonville, 336-449-4512

■ Evangel Fellowship Church of God, 2207 E Cone Blvd., Greensboro 336-375-3900

■ Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church, 5120 Burlington Road, Greensboro, 336-697-0444

■ Calvary Baptist Church, 930 Knox Road, McLeansville, 336-697-9634

Open recreation will be available at the Sportsplex at 16th Street in Greensboro from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Call 336-449-5883 for details.

Decker identifies Black as 'co-conspirator'

Said he was in on \$50,000 party switch scheme

By Gary D. Robertson
The Associated Press

RALEIGH — Less than a week before Election Day, the legal and ethical troubles of House Speaker Jim Black deepened Wednesday when a former ally said the influential lawmaker was a “co-conspirator” in a party-switching scheme that



Decker

helped keep him in power.

The revelation from former Rep. Michael Decker came on the same day that Black's campaign finance reports showed that he has spent nearly \$1 million on legal



Black

fees since July. “There's finally someone to testify against Jim Black,” state GOP Chairman Ferrell Blount said in Charlotte while campaigning for Hal Jordan, Black's Republican challenger for his House seat. “It appears



Decker

to me that Jim Black is pretty smart in holding his money back for his legal defense fund, because it's hard to serve in Raleigh and in prison at the same time.”

Decker has previously acknowledged accepting \$50,000 to join the Democratic party in early 2003, giving Black leverage to remain speaker for the next two years. He is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty in August to one count of conspiracy.

“Was one of your co-conspirators Speaker Jim Black?” U.S. District Judge James Dever asked Decker during the hearing in federal court.

“Yes, your honor,” Decker responded.

It was the first time Black was identified by name in open court for possible involvement in a conspiracy. He has not been charged with any crimes.

Other details about the conspiracy weren't discussed during the half-hour hearing. Decker's attorney, David Freedman, declined to discuss

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1. What do you consider to be the most important issue in the 2006 election for General Assembly?

Foriest: Education is the key to any progress made in the future. We have to insure that the means to educate our people and the will to advance education guide us in anything we do. Education has to be viewed as on-going, encompassing not just elementary and secondary schooling but also extending into our community colleges and universities.

Webster: Most important issue in 2006 election: Flood of illegal aliens overloading our schools, welfare system, medical care system, our courts and correctional systems putting a crushing burden on the taxpayers of North Carolina.

2. Boards of county commissioners in many areas of N.C. are facing pressure to build more schools to keep up with population growth. Do you support changes to any state laws that would give commissioners more tools to raise money to pay for new schools?

Foriest: Often local governments are better able to determine individual school needs than central planners. The more tools available for them to work with, the more accurately they can target solutions without waste and inefficiency.

Webster: Changes to state laws to help county commissioners cope with demand for additional school buildings: a) North Carolina needs to take over the responsibility for Medicaid expense from the backs of the counties. b) NC needs to stop and reverse unfunded mandates to counties. (Each class size reduction is an unfunded mandate.) c) Remove the cap on charter schools

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Local woman killed in Hillsville, Va., wreck

Police say mother of two lost control of her car

Times-News

Tammy Thompson Powers of Burlington died in a wreck Tuesday in Carroll County near Hillsville, Va.

Virginia state police reported that the 22-year-old mother of two died on the scene after losing control of her 1989 Oldsmobile on U.S. 58 near Route 844.

Powers is survived by her husband, Jeffrey Lynn Powers; a daughter and son; parents; a brother; two sisters; and grandparents. She worked for PetSmart and



Powers

attended Brookwood Baptist Church.

The funeral will be held at 2 p.m. Friday at Lowe Funeral Home Chapel. Family will receive friends at the funeral

home from 6-8 tonight.

According to the accident report, Powers' car crossed the center of the roadway at 4:39 p.m. Tuesday. Her car ran off the road and struck an embankment, then traveled back out into the road and hit another car.

The driver of the other car had minor injuries.

Officers are investigating what caused the wreck and are waiting on toxicology results from a lab.

Examiner: Man died within minutes

Trial continues in death of Christopher Wilson

By Keren Rivas
Times-News

GRAHAM — Christopher B. Wilson lived for about 10 minutes after a bullet perforated his left lung and cut through his aorta, causing him to bleed to death on Dec. 8, 2005.

The 30-year-old father of two was probably conscious for only five of those minutes since he suffered a “rapidly fatal wound,” said Deborah Radisch, a doctor with the Chief Medical Examiner's office. She testified during the second day of the first-degree murder trial of David

Leon Wells, the man accused of killing Wilson.

According to earlier testimony, Wells, 59, shot Wilson following an altercation between Wilson and his father, Boyd Wilson.

The altercation began late on Dec. 7, when the elder Wilson told his son to calm down after he began yelling to somebody during a phone conversation.

The men began swinging punches at each other, prosecutors said. Boyd Wilson cut his son on the chest with a pocket knife, which police later found hidden in a couch. The elder Wilson, who ended up with a bruise on the head and a couple of broken ribs as a result of the fight, lost consciousness for a while.

He testified Tuesday he could hear voices in the living room but

couldn't make out what they were saying.

The three men had been drinking that day, he said. They had gone to a bar in Burlington and had bought some beer that they later drank at Wells' house on Sideview Street in Graham. An autopsy report showed Wilson's alcohol blood content at the time of his death was .22.

Christopher Wilson's ex-girlfriend, Brandy Clapp, spoke with Wilson on the telephone three times the night he was killed. The first two calls came in at around 11:30 p.m. He asked her to come pick him up. She testified Tuesday that everything seemed to be all right then.

The last call was different, she said. During that conversation,

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