



PHOTO BY BLANCHE L. TOMASZEWSKI

**ISLAND SCHOOL PLACED ON LOCKDOWN FOLLOWING BOMB, GUN THREATS**

Hilton Head High, Middle and Elementary Schools were on lockdown for a week following a series of bomb and gun threats. The first call came on Monday the 9th, causing the Sheriff's office to place the school on

total lockdown, wherein all students were searched and visitors were prohibited. After some confusion following rampant rumors among parents, the media were notified at noon that day. Additional calls on Thursday kept schools in lockdown throughout the week, and on modified lockdown after the school reopened following Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. At press time, the school had received additional threats and was on total lockdown, but the atmosphere among students was extremely calm.

Month in **REVIEW**

2006 promises to be an interesting year, if January is any indication.

Lowcountry **NEWS**

**BEACH RENOURISHMENT SCHEDULE CHANGED TO MINIMIZE DISRUPTION**

Island residents who were around for the beach renourishment of 1997 remember how loud and disruptive a process it can be. Fortunately, as the town readies for another round of renourishment, they are planning to hold off work during the summer months. When the busy hurricane of this past season pushed back the timetable of renourishing the beaches, consultants decided the beaches were in good enough shape to make it for another year. There are currently two plans in the works: renourishment will either begin at the north or south ends of the island and work down the beach through the fall, or it will begin in the middle and work its way outward.

**DNR CREATES ARTIFICIAL REEF OFF THE SHORE OF HILTON HEAD**

In an effort to promote fishing, and clear out some trash, the Department of Natural Resources recently dumped piping and junked shipping containers in two separate locations off

the coast of Hilton Head, with the hopes that the refuse will create an artificial reef within the next few months. Once oceanic life from sponges to coral takes over the garbage, the project will add two artificial reefs – one south and one east of the island – to already fertile fishing grounds.

**TRAFFIC OFFICIALS LOOK TO SHORTEN SIGNAL TIMES**

Officials including Hilton Head Island's traffic engineer and the State Department of Transportation have embraced a plan to shorten the duration of some green lights off-island, some by as much as a minute. Following one of the worst months for off-island traffic (it was not uncommon to see a fender bender slow traffic for hours in January), traffic engineers will meet in February to discuss and, if possible, quickly implement the plan. Officials admit that the plan is experimental, and can be quickly changed should it prove detrimental to area traffic patterns.

**BRIGHTON BEACH IN BLUFFTON MAY BE UP FOR GRABS**

Following a series of complaints from nearby residents about beer-fueled partying at Brighton Beach, area police decided to step up enforcement. Before they could, they made a startling discovery: no one knows if a majority section of the beach is public property or not. Area residents own a 10-foot strip of the beach, but the other 50 feet is unaccounted for. The closest evidence of state ownership is a road that existed in the area in the 1950s. Documents to support this, however, appear to have been lost to the ages. Until they are found, the beach's legal status remains unclear.

Drawn to the **NEWS**



ILLUSTRATION BY MATT ANDERSON

## RECYCLING ON HILTON HEAD COMES UNDER INCREASED SCRUTINY

At a recent town council meeting, the issue of recycling on Hilton Head was brought to the forefront, sparking an interesting debate on the issue of waste removal on Hilton Head. Despite our town's reputation for environmental protection, we lack the familiar green or blue bins of recycling-savvy communities. While town sentiment seems to support recycling, and town council members have investigated the issue, the town cannot mandate recycling without adopting a full-fledged waste removal program. Just the same, town officials were quick to point out that waste haulers are required under town law to offer recycling pickup at a reasonable rate.

## BLUFFTON SCHOOLS READY TO RELIEVE SOME OVERCROWDING

The Beaufort County school board, in a 9-2 vote, approved \$9.2 million to add classrooms to four Bluffton schools and begin design work on a new elementary school. As part of the agreement, M.C. Riley Elementary will receive four more rooms, Okatie Elementary will get six, Bluffton Elementary will get seven new rooms and H.E. McCracken will grow by ten rooms. The new schools will be built on district-owned land near the intersections of S.C. 46 and S.C. 170.

## MAYOR'S STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS STRESSES TOWN INVOLVEMENT

In his annual state of the town address, Mayor Tom Peeples reviewed Town Council's goals for the next year and lent his support for the arts and other island cultural institutions. Among other topics, Peeples discussed a possible plan to help the Coastal Discovery Museum move into its new site at Honey Horn. Under his plan, the town would donate a certain amount of money, to be matched by the state and by funds collected through community fundraising efforts. Peeples also repeated past assertions that area arts organizations would be served by a controlling council to coordinate venues and performances.

## BLUFFTON TOWN MANAGER RESIGNS; SEARCH BEGINS FOR REPLACEMENT

Josh Martin, Bluffton's town manager for the past two years, resigned this past month just prior to contract renewal. Martin will serve through July, during which he will train a replacement that the town will hire within the coming months.

## Statewide NEWS

### SANFORD COVERS SEVERAL KEY ISSUES IN STATE OF THE STATE SPEECH

Despite claims that he doesn't drive his thinking by electoral demands, Gov. Mark Sanford turned in what some critics call a safe speech at his state of the state address. Safe or not, Sanford touched on several key issues in South Carolina, including property taxes, unemployment and a need for more black judges. The climax of the speech came when Sanford promised to veto any property tax legislation that would increase taxes, and urged legislators to look into certain tax exemptions used as loopholes by developers. Sanford also shed light on the rising unemployment, noting the high number of people coming to South Carolina seeking job prospects. Another issue that drew a round of applause for the governor was the need to appoint more black judges to the judiciary.

### GULLAH / GEECHEE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA COMES CLOSER TO FRUITION

The National Parks Service completed their five-year study of Gullah culture and territory, and their results may bring much-needed assistance to those looking to preserve the Gullah culture along the coast. The study pointed out Hilton Head by name as one spot where Gullah culture was threatened the most, citing the private ownership of Mitchelville which threatens its existence as a historical monument. Publication of the study's findings will also give credence to the importance of the Gullah-Geechee Heritage Act, currently being touted by U.S. Rep. James Clyburn.

### NEW DRAFT OF GEORGIA WATER PLAN HAS SC UP IN ARMS

Officials from Georgia and South Carolina met to hammer out the details of Georgia's water plan, a meeting necessary after Georgia's first draft prompted letters from SCDHEC and the Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority. Both states receive their drinking water from the Florida aquifer, and increased pumping in Georgia causes a gradual seeping of saltwater into drinking water in the Hilton Head area. This happens because of a cone of depression so wide it has also caused salt water intrusions as far south as Brunswick. An initial plan for Georgia's water use, drafted without input from South Carolina, did not call for a cutback in pumping in the Savannah region, and it wasn't until the two states met for a shared summit on water control in Augusta that a satisfactory plan was met. **M**



Ten years ago, Monthly sat down with Sea Pines founder Charles Fraser to discuss his new plans for using the Internet to assist in community planning. Technophiles will enjoy the discussion of hot new ISDN technology that allows for speeds up to 128 K/sec (today's high speed Internet can get almost 50 times that speed).