BY DEBBIE HIGHTOWER

This week is School Bus Driver Appreciation Week. In the above photo, 2018 Bus Driver of the Year Cody Freeman is pictured in his element in the driver’s seat of Bus 202. With an average of 55 students riding his bus each day, Freeman provides transportation to middle and high school students from Braxton Craven and Archdale-Trinity middle schools and Trinity High School.

Williams named Spelling Bee champion

BY DEBBIE HIGHTOWER

RANDOLPH COUNTY — Trinity Elementary School champion spellers from grades 3 to 8, all champions spelled correctly for the county agricultural center as a bond referendum was voted on for the third year, but the project was subsequently determined to be a better fit for 2019 planning. The item did not appear in November as a referendum, remains dedicated to bringing residents a new agricultural center.

Audit reveals clean opinion for Archdale

BY DANIEL KENNEDY

ARCHDALE — A financial audit presented by Winston-Salem-based Cannon and Company accountants last month revealed the city is in good financial standing.

The audit, completed Nov. 8, detailed the city’s financials for the 2017-18 fiscal year. Revenues increased by approximately $603,727 from the previous year. The city generated $12,612,577 in total revenue, while its expenses totaled $12,305,644 during the 2017-2018 FY.

The Winston-Salem firm addressed council in a letter which highlighted a few of what are considered key aspects of the report. Archdale’s net assets, or net position, came to $52,348,461, an increase of more than $2.2 million, as government business activities increased. A city’s net position is used to record the amount by which its assets and deferred out-flows of resources exceed its liabilities and deferred inflows.

As a result, charges for services in the water and sewer fund increased 2.5 percent. Net position in the water and sewer fund increased by more than $22,000.

As of the close of the fiscal year, the City of Archdale’s governmental funds reported combined ending fund balances of $11,138,488, an increase of more than $200,000 from the previous year. Approximately 81 percent of that amount is available for the government’s discretion.

Archdale’s $661,727, or 17 percent of the total general fund expenditures for the fiscal year.

The fund balance for the general fund includes $537,134.
said. “There is always one large gift on Fridays such as a Yeti cup with a saying on it such as Bus drivers carry special cargo, or T-shirts made just for a driver. I give the gifts to my regular drivers.”

Above: Pictured here in front of his “office,” Cody Freeman is one of many combination employees who drives buses in addition to other duties. Below: Although he only transports middle and high school students, Cody Freeman demonstrates built-in car seats that protect smaller passengers. As another safety measure, bus riders have assigned seats so they know where their passengers are located at all times. Before bus riders can cross the street to enter or exit buses, the driver must give them a ‘thumbs-up.’

For those times, Freeman said his biggest challenge is concentrating on the road ahead all while watching the children.

Most of the time everyone behaves, occasionally they do not. For those times, there is already a system in place. For the first warning, Freeman issues a write-up slip. The second time a child breaks a rule, the parents are contacted. If there is a third write-up, the student may be prohibited from riding the bus for one or two weeks, depending on the severity of the infraction.

“I try to reason with them,” said Freeman. “Riding the bus is a privilege, not a right.”

In addition to student cooperation, Freeman said he would like for drivers to be more attentive to school bus lights and driver hand signals.

According to state law, at each stop he has to give the students a thumbs-up when it is OK for them to cross to the bus. Freeman’s heart nearly stopped during a recent situation in which a driver accelerated her vehicle instead of coming to a stop as students attempted to cross the road.

“I had to blow my horn,” he said. “It’s hard to believe with all my lights on it still happened.”

Approximately 67 percent of district drivers hold combination positions within the school system. For example, bus driver Jina Khan also works in the Trinity Elementary cafeteria.

Also a combination employee, Freeman does maintenance work at the high school stadium.

He is quick to tell you, though, that driving a bus is his favorite.

“I really love watching the kids grow up,” Freeman said. “That’s the biggest thing. You get to see them go from being in sixth-grade to almost becoming an adult. And seeing their maturity level change. You get really attached to them.”

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