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Officials: Poor nutrition to shorten life spans

By Jennifer White
The Daily Reflector

Poor nutrition and lack of exercise means children now can expect to have a shorter life span than their parents, school health officials said.

Donna Ware, child nutrition director for Pitt County Schools, said there are more overweight children in school now than ever before.

"In eastern North Carolina, the percentage of children who are overweight is growing, and we are above the national average for children to be

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DIET

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obese," Ware said. "So it's something that we've been concerned about for several years now."

The hospital is seeing more children ages 8 to 12 with diabetes, she said.

"I know that there will be more heart-related problems as well as diabetes, the area of most concern right now," Ware said.

Children are not eating enough fruits and vegetables or drinking enough milk and water, Ware said. They're also spending a lot of time in front of the television and computer instead of being active.

"It's not just one particular factor," she said. "I think it's what they eat and the lack of activity that's causing the problem."

Ware said the school system has several programs in place to help kids eat healthier and be more active. Through the Eat Smart, Move More program, which started last January, the school system lowered the amount of fat, calories, sodium and sugar in school meals. It also took extra snacks out of the cafeteria.

"The students were not able to buy the extra food items unless they were part of the meals," Ware said.

The program also encouraged parents to include more fruits, vegetables and whole grains in their children's diets and to prepare meals at home instead of picking up fast food.

"Food items that are prepared at home are usually healthy, lower calorie items than what you pick up at a fast food establishment," Ware said.

Ware said the program has successfully raised awareness among parents about the problem of childhood obesity.

"They supported the changes we were making in the lunch and breakfast program and felt like it was time for us to be doing that," she said.

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Experts encourage fitness year-round

By Jennifer White
The Daily Reflector

Many people who make weight loss their New Year's resolution will give up dieting and exercise before they ever see results.

They give up just as their bodies begin responding to the changes brought on by diet and exercise, John Briley, exercise specialist at ViQuest Center, said.

"You usually get about two good months out of the resolutioners," Briley said. It takes an average of two months after starting a weight loss plan before a person begins to see physical changes in their body, he said.

Nutrition takes a back seat during the holidays, which leads to a nationwide rush to the gym in the new year, Briley said.

"There's that mind-set of, 'I'll splurge during the holidays, but the rest of the year I'll eat the way I'm supposed to,' and that doesn't happen," Briley said. "That's one of the main reasons why people tend to exercise more in the new year, and then it dies off, because they haven't made it a habit.

"You wish people had that same enthusiasm (for diet and exercise) year-round, you wish you could bottle it and sell it," he said.

Amanda Holliday, a dietitian at Pitt County Memorial Hospital, said many people gain weight between Thanksgiving

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and the New Year. "... just enough generally for your clothes to not fit right," he said.

Holaday said that dietitians are seeing increases in fad dieting without exercise because people are looking for a quick and easy way to lose weight. Fad diets have some immediate success, she said, but they don't help people keep the weight off.

"If you're looking for weight loss that may last for a month, then anytime you cut something out from your diet you're going to lose weight," Holaday said. "If you look at success as maintaining healthy weight loss long term, as a lifestyle change, (fad diets) are not successful at all."

Briley said that the solution for healthy weight loss is simple — a healthy diet coupled with exercise.

"You always hear about these fad diets, and the only thing you need to do is eat right and exercise," he said. "If you diet and don't exercise, then that's only half the battle. You can see success either way, but you won't see as much success if you did both."

John Minges, Pitt County commissioner, lost 10 inches from his waist in the last three years. But Minges, who exercises five days a week, said he could lose more of his 285 pounds if he ate healthier meals.

"Nutrition, if I had to pinpoint anything, is I think my biggest battle," said Minges, who eats fried foods, skips breakfast and enjoys dining in restaurants.

"Portion sizes, if you go out to eat, are two to three times what you should really eat," he said.

Holaday said that portion sizes play a huge role in Americans gaining weight.

"We have this mentality that more is better," she said. "If we can pay five cents less and supersize, then we are getting more for our money, and more for our waistline."

"We are over served in restaurants and we over serve ourselves at home," Holaday said. "A lot of times when people make lifestyle changes, it's not that you have to give up your favorite food, but just cut back on the quantity."

Holaday said that the size of a single serving depends on the type of food, but she recommends a half a cup of vegetables, cheese the size of four to six dice, and meat the size of a deck of cards. Holaday said that people who don't control their weight could face a myriad of health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, joint and back pain and depression.

Minges said he has already experienced some of the health affects of being overweight. He has been diagnosed with high cholesterol, and although he said eating better would help, genetics is partly to blame.

There is a theory in the nutrition community that each person has a certain weight that their body likes to maintain, Holaday said. However, that theory assumes a person has a body mass index — a weight-to-height ratio — of around 20.

"If your body mass index is 35 and somebody says, 'I can't lose weight,' that is not true," she said.

With Americans expecting quick weight loss results, choosing fad diets over exercise, and assuming some weight gain is out of their control, fitness experts strive to keep their customers motivated.

Vicki Rouse, owner of Ladies Workout Express, offers monthly challenges to encourage her members to lose weight. Rouse awards prizes — she plans to give away trips this spring — to members who lose the most weight.

"Basically, they're competing with each other," she said.

ViQuest gives members points for their workouts. The members exchange points for gift certificates for ViQuest services at the end of the year.

Briley encourages people to avoid scales because they can get easily discouraged if they gain a few pounds.

"People don't look at your forehead and see a number, it's how you're perceived," Briley said. "The weight, it plagues a lot of people."

He said "the best way and the easiest" way to measure weight loss is how your clothes fit.

He also avoids telling his clients exactly when they will achieve their weight loss goals.

"People ask that question, 'How long do you think it will be before I see results?' and you try not to answer, because what you're doing for them is setting that goal," he said. "They'll leave if they don't meet the goal when you say they should. I encourage them to take it one day at a time."

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Yarrell promoted to recreation manager

The Daily Reflector

The supervisor of Greenville's special populations recreation program is being promoted.

Kelvin Yarrell is being promoted to recreation manager in the Greenville Recreation and Parks Department. He is replacing Carol Powers, who is retiring.

Yarrell will be responsible for managing the recreation centers at South Greenville, Elm Street, Eppes Recreation Center at Thomas Foreman Park, as well as the department's arts & crafts programs, senior adult programs, special populations programs, summer youth programs and other youth and adult programs.

Yarrell started working with the Recreation and Parks Department in 1996 and became a full-time employee two years later.

Besides supervising the department's special populations programs, Yarrell has been active in the state Special Olympics.

In 2004 and 2005, he was games director and committee chairman for the North Carolina Special Olympics State Basketball tournaments.

A Greenville native and J.H. Rose High School graduate, Yarrell earned bachelor's and master's degrees in recreation and leisure services from East Carolina University.

He has also earned the Certified Recreation and Parks Professional accreditation from the National Recreation and Parks Association. In 2004, Yarrell was awarded the National Recreation and Parks Board of Trustees Diversity Scholarship.

That same year, the Kiwanis Club of Greenville recognized him as the Distinguished Kiwanian of the Year. He received the ECU Recreation Leisure Studies Alumni Society's Distinguished Alumni Award and was named Special Olympics Coordinator of the Year for the district in 2002.

Yarrell also works with the Caring is Sharing Food Drive. He is a co-founder and co-director of the Pitt County Kids Fest: Celebrate the Week of the Young Child.
Public Forum

Students ostracized boy who wouldn’t pray

This holiday season we have heard a cacophony of protests that Christianity was not prominent enough in either our private lives or our public lives.

I would like to relate a personal account that, aside from the Establishment Clause, is the compelling argument against the practice of religion in public institutions.

In 1963, the year of the landmark Abington vs. Schempp and Murray vs. Curlett cases, I was a high school senior. I had a fellow senior named Jimmy Brooks.

Jimmy was a good student, a gentle soul and one of the best fullbacks our school ever fielded. Jimmy also returned punts for us, and the many times he caught the ball as opposing players bore down upon him inspired my awe at his courage.

However, later that year he demonstrated even greater courage in a different way: one that, to my permanent shame, I didn’t accept or understand at the time.

Every morning in homeroom we would begin the day with a prayer. One day that spring, Jimmy refused to join the class in prayer.

To this day I do not know why Jimmy refused, but I do know what the results were. Jimmy was ostracized by the entire school and some of his teammates even talked about how they might exact retribution against him.

Since then I have participated in prayer many times in church and private gatherings without internal conflict.

However, as an East Carolina football player, I participated in coach-led prayers and I always thought of Jimmy and my guilt for what we had done to him and for my lack of courage and understanding.

I hope that no student will have to face what Jimmy did and that others would not have to wait so long to find their courage as I did.

WILLIAM D. REAGAN JR.
Greenville
'I tried to do everything I can to really hit the ground running.'

ERSKINE BOWLES, NEW PRESIDENT OF STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Bowles embraces job with intensity, finesse

BY JANE STANCILL
STAFF WRITER

Erskine Bowles brokered deals on Wall Street and ran Bill Clinton's White House, so it's no surprise that he is taking over the UNC system presidency with a businessman's eye and a politician's touch.

So far, Bowles the businessman has cracked the whip on top UNC staff, presenting them with homework assignments about a week before Christmas.

This week, Bowles the politician will entertain legislators from both sides of the aisle at a Tar Heels basketball game. He has already schmoozed with his former political foe, U.S. Sen. Richard Burr, hosting Burr and his sons in front-row seats at UNC-Chapel Hill's Smith Center.

Bowles, 60, officially succeeds retiring UNC President Molly Broad today, but he has already toured the 16 campuses and met one on one with chancellors, UNC board members and legislators.

Erskine Bowles becomes the UNC system president today.

STAFF PHOTO BY HARRY LYNCH

He has jotted notes during conversations with professors, students and university workers. And he has picked the brains of other university presidents in ordinary.

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the United States and abroad.
"I tried to do everything I can to really hit the ground running," he said in an interview Friday.
Already there are signs of change at the UNC system's headquarters in Chapel Hill — a 125-employee operation that has, at times, been a target of legislators' criticism. Two vice presidents will leave their posts for jobs on UNC campuses by March, and the senior academic vice president, Gretchen Bataille, is now interim chancellor at the N.C. School of the Arts. Bowles said he did not initiate the changes, which he called part of a natural transition.
The man who once ran the White House assures folks that he is just one of the staff. He has taken to calling the UNC system staff "general administration" again, a term Broad had dropped in favor of the more reverential "office of the president."

Keep it simple

Bowles eschews the pomp attached to the job. In a December memo to top staff, he suggested ditching his inauguration planned for the spring. "Can I not have one and instead make an address to the legislature and use the funds we would have spent [on the celebration] on need-based scholarships?" he wrote.
"If we must have one," he added, "would anyone be offended if we kept the cost very low?"
The vice presidents replied that he should have at least a modest celebration, one he insists will be paid for with private donations.
"I want to do everything I can to let people know I get it, that we live in a time of limited resources," Bowles said.
He is not sheepish about being in charge. In his five-page memo to staff, he instructed each administrator to list his or her top five or six goals for 2006, along with quantifiable measures of accountability, cost, timelines and funding sources. He asked for status reports on every major university issue, including UNC's relationship with public schools and community colleges, online education, privately developed dormitories and campus safety.
He wanted to know about moves by UNC-Pembroke to establish an optometry program and by East Carolina to start a dental school. He wanted to know the status of UNC's partnership with Dole Foods to revitalize the mill town of Kannapolis. He wanted to know what could be done to increase scholarships and to commercialize professors' research.
Those who have watched Bowles in action say they are surprised at how much he has already done.
"I started as a skeptic, and yet he has already impressed me with his diligence and hard work even before he officially assumes the responsibilities of the office," said Brent Barringer, a UNC Board of Governors member from Cary.
At UNC-CH in November, Bowles said that he wanted to help universities excel but that he thought the campuses should have more specific missions. He referred to the UNC system's long-term plan as "squishy."
Early in his tenure, Bowles will be confronted with big issues, including the always contentious debate over tuition. The UNC board is wrestling with how to allow campuses more freedom to set tuition while making rates more predictable for families. Many fear that higher bills and more student debt will make college less affordable.

A shorter wish list

Bowles spent the first couple of months in big-picture discussions, and now he is starting to focus on the details. The UNC system has begun to put together a budget request for the next legislative session, and observers say Bowles will have a more targeted plan in asking for money. The UNC budget request probably won't look like a phone book anymore.
"His approach is to have a shorter list rather than a longer list, with clearly defined priorities," said Brad Wilson, chairman of the UNC board.
In his memo to UNC staff, Bowles wrote, "If everything is a priority, nothing is."
"Financial matters should be one of his strong suits," Wilson said. Bowles will likely take on new roles in higher education organizations but keep his hand in the corporate world. In December, he was named to the board of Morgan Stanley, a huge financial-services firm. It is one of four corporate boards on which Bowles will serve, adding handsome outside pay to his UNC salary of $425,000. (He has said he will donate $125,000 of that each year to need-based financial aid.)
"I'm not troubled by that," Wilson said of Bowles' board memberships. "In fact, some of the board service he is engaged in could be helpful to the university."
Having started his career at Morgan Stanley, Bowles said he owed the company. But he stressed that his first priority is the university system. "If I see myself spread thin at all," he said, "then by golly I'll be the first to say I'll cut back on the outside activities."
Bowles' North Carolina roots and connections have been on display. Heads turned when the president-to-be strode into the UNC basketball game with Burr, who defeated him in the 2004 U.S. Senate race. Some called it a master political stroke.
"They got even more attention than [coach] Roy Williams," Barringer said jokingly. "That pretty well typifies all those personal, professional and family advantages."
On Monday, Bowles and his bulldog will move into the UNC president's Franklin Street home, where his wife, Springs Industries CEO Crandall Bowles, will join him frequently from Charlotte.
Now that Bowles' crash course in academia is done, he will begin his new career.
"I'm very excited," he said. "I can't wait for Tuesday."