THE DAILY CLIPS

January 3, 2006

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
   The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal
   USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
   Newsweek
U.S. News & World Report
   Business Week
   Time

East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@mail.ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
Garden spot brightens up University Towers

Volunteers create an outdoor haven for residents of the Greenville Housing Authority complex for the elderly and disabled.

By Paul Dunn
The Daily Reflector

Look hard enough, and you could see faces spring from raindrops on Monday.

They covered the surface of a dark-stained wooden swing, one you’d expect to find on a porch or garden — maybe even on a grassy lot surrounded by bird feeders and metal flower sculptures.

Some drops appeared to be smiling, perhaps anticipating the arrival of University Towers resident Alberta Diggins.

She loves to swing, Diggins said.

But not Monday.

A whispering rain hovered over Greenville much of the afternoon, shrouding the area in a peaceful melancholy — but discouraging swingers.

Diggins, a reed-thin 94-year-old with a mischievous chuckle, will wait until it warms up before she heads to the apartment complex’s newest amenity.

“It makes me feel good when I swing,” Diggins, who has lived at University Towers for 16 years, said. “I’m thinking that it’s going to be very nice.”

The two-person swing is the center piece of a new garden site that since Friday adorns the 60-unit apartment complex, a Greenville Housing Authority-owned residence for the elderly and disabled at 500 E. Third St.

The site, completed Friday, was built by ECU students and employees of Lowe’s Home Improvement Warehouse of Greenville.

Comprised of triangular- and crescent moon-shaped figures of bark, the garden offers University Towers residents four park benches, five bird feeders, eight black metal flower and hummingbird sculptures and decorative lighting.

According to Lowe’s human resources manager Jessica Shoen, the store budgets money each year for projects she said better the community and “give back to the community.”

Eight Lowe’s employees helped with the one-day project.

See TOWERS, B3

---

TOWERS

Continued From B1

she explained.

The results thrilled Towers resident Mildred J. Whichard. The 79-year-old has lived in the complex for 11 years.

“All of us will enjoy the park when the weather gets warmer,” Whichard said, pointing to other women seated in the apartment’s lobby on Monday.

“I think it’s wonderful, and it gives this place a newer look.”

Paul Dunn can be contacted at pdunn@coxnc.com and 329-9569.
Paper scooped on the Mazey story at ECU

Great job of scooping everyone on the Randy Mazey story. Those e-mails that were uncovered (by using FOIA provisions) between Terry Holland and Steve Ballard and put on your Web site were quite interesting, even if the good parts were blacked out.

Do you think you will ever get an interview with Mr. Mazey to confirm some of these facts? Keep up the good work of investigative reporting. Oh, I'm sorry. I thought this was the Raleigh News and Observer, not

The Daily Reflector.

Never Mind.

WALTER ZOLLER
Greenville
LABOR OF LOVE ENDS

Ed Garrison’s retirement completes long devotion to Social Services

By Amanda Karr
The Daily Reflector

For the Pitt County Department of Social Services, the new year will begin in a way it hasn’t since 1979. It will begin without Ed Garrison.

After 26 years as the county’s director of social services, Garrison has retired, stepping down at age 64.

He leaves behind decades of leadership and a dedication to social services that stretched across four counties and 43 years.

"Ed has provided service to not only the eastern part of the state, but to all 99 directors across the state. He is a source of knowledge, always someone you could call," said John Shore, president of the state Association of County Directors of Social Services and director of Guilford County Social Services.

For Garrison, it is a career he didn’t expect but is glad he chose.

"It has been a labor of love from the beginning. I hope I’ve made a difference, but only time will answer that."

Ed Garrison
retired director of Pitt County Social Services

work steered him away.

"Society does have a responsibility to those less fortunate. The only way people are going to evolve and be able to support themselves is to have the support... We have a responsibility to those less fortunate. We are our brother’s keeper. If we don’t do that it is a sad society, a bad world," he said.

Garrison started as a social worker in Rutherford County, moved to McDowell County as a social work supervisor and spent almost 13 years as director of social services in Halifax County.

Married, with a 7-year-old daughter, he moved to Pitt County in 1980 for the better

See GARRISON, B3

Continued From B1

schools. He made his latest move into retirement with his thoughts on another 7-year-old girl — his granddaughter — and her 5-year-old brother.

The move to Pitt County was a challenging one, he remembers, even now pointing to gaining the confidence of the community and the county commissioners as one of the biggest challenges of his career.

"In Halifax County, I was the authority. I came here, and I found everyone was the authority," he said.
Changes, struggles

It wouldn't be the last change Garrison would face.

As he worked to clean out his office in the month leading up to his retirement, the meticulous record-keeper pulled out files dating back to his start in the county.

The papers list the department's budget in 1980 at $26 million with 128 employees. Ten years later, the department boasted 188 employees and a $59.8 million budget.

Today, the department operates at full staff with 223 employees and a $206 million budget.

He has seen policy changes as well as growth.

One successful program, he said, is Work First. Started in the late 1990s, the program aimed to get people off of welfare and gainfully employed. Before the program started, 3,000 families were receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children checks every month.

Today, there are 187.

"I think we’re doing better from moving people from welfare-dependent to being wage earners," Garrison said.

One of the biggest changes is the importance put on protecting children and the elderly, he said.

"There was not a lot of emphasis on child welfare and adult services. It was just about signing a check," Garrison said of his start in social services.

Now, it's a priority. In August, Garrison assigned two social workers to cover only night and weekend hours. Before, workers rotated being on call in case of a report of abuse or neglect.

"If we make a mistake, if we err, it will be on the side of protecting children," he said. "I’d rather pull a child out of what I perceive to be a bad situation and return them as quickly as possible than let something horrible happen to that child."

Deputy County Manager John Bulow recalled asking Garrison his wishes for Christmas one year. Garrison told him the only thing he wanted was for no harm to come to a child, Bulow said.

"Every time a child has died in this county has been a low, because theoretically, this is the program that is supposed to protect all children," Garrison said.

The part of his job he describes as the most heart-wrenching also involves dying, but on the other end of life.

As social services director, Garrison would be appointed by the court as the guardian of the sick and elderly who have no money and no one else to care for them. When they had no set instructions for making an end-of-life decision, that decision fell to Garrison.

"My own mother lasted five years with Alzheimer’s in a nursing home and died on her own before I had to make that decision and had to carry the burden of that decision," Garrison said.

"I don’t have an out like that (as social services director.) When is the time to let a person end life naturally instead of keeping them alive on artificial means? As long as I live, I don’t think I’ll ever know. I do the best I can with the decision I’m confronted with."

The next step

A social services director affects lives with every decision, a responsibility Garrison takes seriously and believes others should as well.

"The reason DSS came to being in this country is people have abdicated their responsibility to others, especially those lower class than them," he said.

"Whoever cares for the poor and people in trouble, the functions of social services are essential, he said.

"It gives people a chance. It gives children who are in harm's way a chance for a better, safer life. It does the same thing for the elderly. It gives the low-income family a chance to see another day through food stamps and Medicaid,” he said.

The future of social services will be to meet the challenges of the growing elderly population and to deal with the effects of gangs and substance abuse, Garrison believes.

They are challenges a new generation will take on, some thanks to a fund established in Garrison's name.

The East Carolina University School of Social Work has created the scholarship for students already working in the field.

It was one of many honors presented to Garrison during a retirement reception last week. Most notably, he received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, bestowed by the governor upon individuals who have a proven record of service to the state.

"Ed is one of those very special people who is very dedicated, very caring. He has seen to it this community has had the very best services that can be issued through this department,” state Rep. Edith Warren, D-Pitt, said after presenting him with the award.

Hundreds of well-wishers, from employees to social services directors from other counties and community leaders, turned out to wish Garrison well at the reception.

For Garrison, the future holds some well-earned rest, spending time with family and perhaps a little surf fishing, he said.

"It's been interesting. I wouldn't have given it up for anything in the world," he said, pausing and adding with a smile, "and I wouldn't take a nickel to do it again."

Amanda Karr can be contacted at akarr@coxnc.com and 329-9574
Bowles' words of wisdom

Erskine Bowles, the new president of the UNC system, recently gave some advice to nearly 1,000 graduates at Appalachian State University's winter graduation. The December speech might offer some clues to how he will operate in his new job.

How to be successful, according to Bowles:
- Don't promise something you can't deliver — "Be that person who under-promises, and for God's sake never over-promise," he said. "It's like when I get home at 7:30 at night. If I tell my wife I'll be home at 8 and I get home at 7:30, I am a hero. But if I tell her I'll be home at 7 and I get home at that exact 7:30, I'm in the doghouse. Either way, I got home at 7:30. But one way I am a hero, the other way I am a dog."
- Always do quality. "If you are going to do it, do it right. My experience has been that a job well done is the best advertising you can have."
- Say thank you. "Take time to show you are grateful and you'll find that other folks will bust their buttons to make you look good."
- Encourage creativity and embrace change. "I want you to know you can make substantive change, you can improve your product — even in the government — but you have to create an atmosphere that encourages creativity. You have to have the courage to change. You must embrace change and treat it as your friend."
- Give to your community. "It doesn't matter if you are to the right of Jesse Helms or to the left of Ted Kennedy. All of us can find the time to try in our own way to make this world a better place."
- Save time for your family. "When you look for a job, look for a family-friendly place to work, one that encourages you to spend time with your family. Then do it."