THE DAILY CLIPS

January 8, 2009

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@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
Sentence satisfies shooting victim

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, January 07, 2009

The 30-year-sentence passed Tuesday by Superior Court Judge Rusty Duke for a 2007 armed robbery and shooting of an East Carolina University student made one young man a prisoner and freed another young man to recover from the ordeal and move ahead with his life, he said.

Kendrick Montel Little, now 21, received the sentence for his involvement in the assault and robbery of a 70-year-old man and the robbery of 10 ECU students at an off-campus party on Fourth Street last year. He accepted responsibility — while denying guilt — for shooting Drew Daly, 23, a student at the party who grabbed a shotgun from one of the robbers without realizing that six others had rushed through the house and into the yard, where more partygoers were gathered.

Daly survived four shots from a handgun that, according to prosecutor Kimberly Robb, was fired by Little. Now he wants to move forward.

"I'm happy that it's over," Daly said. "I feel a little remorse for (Little); 30 years is a really long time for someone to go away. Hopefully, they'll be able to help him out some while he's in prison."

He added an afterthought: "I think I'm satisfied that it's a fair judgment."

Little's attorney, Ernest L. Conner, disagreed with that assessment even before Duke read the sentence.

Conner argued that his client's diminished mental capacity, caused by mild mental retardation, attention deficit hyperactive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder stemming from childhood abuse warranted diminished culpability. He tried to convince Duke that Little was set up by the other defendants to take the fall as the leader of the incident. Duke did not accept Conner's argument, but did order psychological assistance for Little in prison.

With one part of his ordeal finished, Daly will pursue a master's degree in fine arts at a university in the Midwest, he said.

"I'm fine now. It's just been a very interesting experience. I don't have any real problems. I seem to be doing very well. I have to have a bullet removed from my back. It's been causing me problems when I sit down," Daly said.

He dismissed depictions of himself as a hero.

"I don't know if I'd say all that. I think it was a little silly of me (to grab the gun), but you don't know how you'll react in certain situations. I wasn't aware of the full circumstances, either," Daly said.

He believes the incident led to increased awareness of the dangers students face when they venture off campus.

"I think safety (efforts) increased greatly because of it, and I'm really happy about that," Daly said. "I've heard about some problems in the area, but I think things seem to have stabilized since then," Daly said.

He cautioned students to maintain their vigilance when off campus.

"Just be careful. I was silly to be out so late at night," he said.

There have been several rashes of break-ins and robberies during the past year in the north and downtown areas bordering the campus and throughout the Tar River neighborhood where many students live.
Following the robbery at Fourth Street where Daly was shot, the ECU administration hosted a forum attended by Chancellor Steve Ballard and Greenville Police Chief William Anderson. They discussed the incident, what was being done to address safety and security issues in the area and steps every resident and student can take to be more aware and secure.

Since that time, Anderson restructured the patrol division to create more narrowly focused and supervised areas, allowing officers to become more familiar with residents and activities in each area. His area policing plan has been followed by an overall decline in robberies and violent crimes, while property crimes have increased slightly, he said.

Daly's parents, John and Cece Daly, shared Anderson's observation that violent crimes are up statewide and nationwide, and noted the case of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill student body president Eve Carson, who was kidnapped and killed near that campus March 5, 2008.

"We're glad these guys have been caught," John Daly said. "With the bad cases we've had in North Carolina, such as the Eve Carson case, we don't want to see recurrences of that. So these guys have to be retained until they're helped or not be put back out."

Cece Daly looked at crime in campus areas even more simply.

"I'm just thankful that our son was not a statistic," she said.

Contact Michael Abramowitz at mabramowitz@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9571.

Copyright 2009 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved. - -
Economist: Rough times far from over

By Mike Grizzard
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, January 07, 2009

Given the tsunami of grim economic news in 2008, economist Matthew Martin suggests the best thing to do in a new year is look forward.

Martin, an economist with the Federal Reserve, began making his annual rounds this week as he provides a forecast for how the economy may pan out in the coming months. He spoke to about 130 people at a luncheon at the Hilton Greenville after meeting with a crowd of about 600 in Raleigh on Wednesday morning in forums sponsored by national business firm RSM McGladrey.

The message he delivered is that rough times are far from over, but the economy eventually will pick up.

"Right now obviously we're in the midst of a significant recession," Martin said. "The economy's not doing so well. ... We're going to get some bad news about how the fourth quarter went. But there are some reasons for optimism as you look at the year, not that we are going to have an immediate spring-back to the U.S. economy, but there's reason to think the recession will end some time this year or the next. You can see at least the seeds of a recovery. ... I think for that recovery to be sustainable one of the things that has to happen is housing markets need to stabilize."

A slumping housing market is only part of an economic ball that unraveled in 2008 and resulted in the loss of more than 2 million jobs nationwide.

Gas prices reaching $4 a gallon and rising food prices zapped consumer spending. September ushered in a crushing blow to consumer confidence after the failure of AIG and Lehman Brothers triggered a meltdown in the financial markets. Auto sales and retail spending subsequently plummeted.

"What happened on Wall Street affected consumer confidence very quickly," Martin said. "... They started putting off purchases like cars. I hope that for the near future we can put to rest this notion that what happens in financial markets doesn't have a bearing down in the local town."

That includes places like Greenville, which despite an economy centered around the growing sectors of health care and education, saw its share of closings and layoffs, including at major manufacturers DSM and NACCO.

James Kleckley, director of the Bureau of Business Research at the ECU College of Business, said the slowdown is similar to the 2001 recession, but with higher unemployment (near 8 percent). Building permits also are at their lowest point since the bureau started tracking them 18 years ago.

"When you look at an economy like Greenville, we really have to look at it based on what has gone on nationally," Kleckley said. "Pitt County is well-positioned to grow. We still have a ways to go. We're still in a poor area of the state, but it's a diverse economy where the two real key industries for us are health care and education and these are really the industries for the future. But the real bottom line is Pitt County growth is really going to be dependent upon the health of the U.S. economy."

Kleckley also stressed the importance of decisions made by elected officials on the local and state level as well as efforts by the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce, which has introduced its own economic stimulus plan to aid local business owners. To thrive, he said, Pitt County must understand what affects neighboring counties also affects Pitt. Residents in Beaufort, Craven, Edgecombe, Greene, Lenoir, Martin and Wilson counties not only provide part of the county's work force but also come here to eat, shop and attend school.
“There’s certainly an inter-relationship between the areas that’s vitally important that we have to realize,” Kleckley said. “If something hurts next door, it’s going to hurt in Pitt County, and if we start hurting in Pitt County it’s going to hurt in the region.”

Martin, who tracks state and regional economic trends, said North Carolina is in a good news-bad news situation. With still a relatively high concentration of manufacturing industries compared to the rest of the nation, job losses came quickly in 2008 — the sector lost 4.7 percent of its work force last year. But population continues to grow, which translates into to more home sales.

“Coming into 2008, North Carolina looked like it was in great shape,” Martin said. “... There was a lot of reason for optimism. Over the course of 2008, though, North Carolina’s economy deteriorated more rapidly than what we saw nationally. The mix of industries is a little less favorable and puts North Carolina at a little more risk than the nation as a whole for the near term.”

Restoring confidence is the first step to households and businesses to increase spending, Martin said. For now, uncertainty has put major purchases and projects on hold.

“This recession is very different from what we saw in the recession in 2001 in that consumers are very much pulling back and reining in their spending,” Martin said. “Some of it has to do with declining resources, but a lot of it is also consumers deciding they need to just to postpone purchases as much as possible.

“Nobody wants to borrow money if they can avoid it. So there's not going to be any business spending. For the near term until they get some idea how the economy's going to get through this stretch, businesses are pulling back.”

Government stimulus packages and low interest rates should help, Martin said. But the catalyst, he said, will be when housing construction picks up and price stability returns to the housing market.

“I think I’ve said this for the third year running, but I think we will find a bottom in the housing market nationally,” he said. “I think I'll be right this time. If not, I never said that.”

Contact Mike Grizzard at mgrizzard@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9580.

Copyright 2009 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved. - -
Brain pacemaker helps Parkinson's, but with risks

By CARLA K. JOHNSON
The Associated Press

Thursday, January 08, 2009

Chicago

Parkinson's sufferers who had electrodes implanted in their brains improved substantially more than those who took only medicine, according to the biggest test yet of deep brain stimulation.

The study, which followed patients for six months, offers the most hopeful news to date for Parkinson's sufferers. The new technique reduced tremors, rigidity and flailing of the limbs and allowed people to move freely for nearly five extra hours a day.

But the research also revealed higher-than-expected risks. About 40 percent of the patients who received these "brain pacemakers" suffered serious side effects, including a surprising number of falls with injuries.

"We had one patient who felt so good he went up to repair his roof, fell down and broke both his legs," said lead author Fran Weaver of Hines Veterans Affairs Hospital, outside Chicago. "Patients are feeling so much better, they forget they still have Parkinson's."

There is no cure for Parkinson's disease, which affects more than 1 million Americans. Patients suffer from increasingly severe tremors and periodically rigid limbs as their brains stop making dopamine, a chemical needed for movement. They can have trouble walking, speaking and writing, and often struggle with depression.

Standard treatments include drugs to stimulate dopamine. But over time, the medicines can produce flailing movements that are as troubling as Parkinson's tremors.

With deep brain stimulation, which was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2002 for advanced Parkinson's and had been performed on thousands of patients, a surgeon implants electrodes in the brain, which are then connected to a pacemaker-like device that can be adjusted and turned on and off. That device, implanted under the collarbone or in the abdomen, sends tiny electrical pulses to the brain, disabling overactive nerve cells.

The latest findings were published in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association. The researchers studied 255 people with advanced Parkinson's at seven VA and six university hospitals. Patients were randomly assigned to have surgery plus the standard medication, or medication alone.

After six months, patients visited neurologists who did not know whether they had had surgery or medication. In the surgery group, 86 out of 121 (71 percent) saw meaningful improvements in movement, as scored by the neurologists. In the medication group, 43 out of 134 patients (32 percent) showed meaningful improvements.

In the surgery group, 49 had serious problems, including infections, falls and one death because of complications from the surgery. In the control group, only 15 people encountered serious problems.

Another way to measure gains for Parkinson's patients is the amount of "on" time — good quality movement time. Recording these times during the day in diaries, patients who had surgery gained, on average, nearly five hours of "on" time each day. Patients who didn't have surgery made no gains in that area.

"It's really brought a lot of freedom back to my life," said surgery patient Sharon Pederson, 51, of Tomales, Calif. She said medication worked well for four or five years but started causing her arms to fling out wildly.

"I would go to brush my hair and the brush would fly across the room," she said. "Once I was eating a yogurt
while I was in the car. I came inside and said, "I had a fight with a container of yogurt." It was all over the inside of the car."

Surgery not only stopped the flailing but halted an intense sensation that her nerve endings were burning. Her depression also disappeared. The ability to write her normal flowing signature came back, too.

It didn't work for everyone. A few surgery patients (about 3 percent) got worse.

"You don't want to underestimate or overestimate the risks," said Weaver, a specialist in chronic care. "It still is an individual decision between a patient and a physician."

Surgery to implant the electrodes and pacemaker costs about $60,000 and is covered by Medicare and some insurance companies.

Medications can cost $5,000 a year. After surgery, patients were able to cut their medications by 23 percent on average.

One-fourth of the people in the study were 70 and older. That age group has been excluded from many prior studies of DBS. In the new study, the older surgery patients were able to control their movements better, but younger ones benefited even more.

Those findings will help older patients make decisions about treatment, said Dr. Michael Okun of the University of Florida, medical director of the National Parkinson Foundation. The information on falls and other problems will help doctors give better advice, he said.

"This study with its careful methodology will help in setting a higher bar for tracking adverse events," said Okun, who was not involved in the study.

Four of the study's 22 co-authors reported financial ties to companies that make devices or drugs for Parkinson's. The lead author said she has no such ties.

The study was funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Institutes of Health.

Minneapolis-based Medtronic Inc., maker of the devices purchased for the study, provided the money for collecting data.

In about six months, more results are expected from the study, which also compared two brain regions for electrode placement.

Copyright 2009 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved. - -
Distance education enrollment up 20%

Online classes help jobless, reduce need for buildings

ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

Enrollment in distance education courses through UNC system campuses shot up more than 20 percent in 2008. The jump points in part to the desperation of out-of-work people looking to shift careers and make themselves more marketable.

More than 22,000 UNC system students stayed off campus entirely last year, taking courses either at satellite sites or over the Internet. They are a relatively small but rapidly growing piece of the UNC system's overall student pool, which topped 215,000 in 2008.

The UNC system's Board of Governors will review the trend today as part of an annual enrollment report.

While many of these students are North Carolinians, others live around the country and beyond. They shop around, compare tuition rates and look for specific programs that suit their needs. For a student with Internet access, college can be anywhere.

Take Rodney Thacker, who as an N.C. State student never hung out at the Brickyard, wandered the halls of D.H. Hill Library or cheered on the Wolfpack at Carter-Finley Stadium.

Instead, he worked days at a food plant in his hometown of Martinsville, Va. He then worked well into the night at his computer, pecking away at a food safety certification course through NCSU's online education division.

"I guess I'm kind of unusual," he said. "I can be up late at night and still be here at work at 7."

He recently concluded the 18-month program, which led to a promotion and pay increase. Thacker didn't care that he never stepped foot on the NCSU campus.

At 54, Thacker represents a growing population of midcareer professionals using distance education to better themselves. Of the UNC system's 22,000 students who chose the distance education route last year, more than 60 percent are 25 or older. Some want to change fields; others are out of work and desperate for new expertise. Many need flexibility.

"We're finding a receptive audience out there," said Alan Mabe, the UNC system's vice president for academic planning and university-school programs. "For a lot of people, it's the only way to complete a degree."

While university officials can't say how many new students this year enrolled after losing a job, the numbers suggest the economy is a factor. At NCSU, for example, an undergraduate certificate course in computer programming -- popular among folks with bachelor's degrees who see a bright future in tech fields -- is in high demand right now, officials there say.

The term "distance education" encompasses both online courses and those taught by the university faculty at satellite sites across North Carolina and, occasionally, in other states.

Over the last few years, the UNC system has increasingly seen online education as the best way to deal with increasing demand from traditional students and midcareer workers such as Thacker. In 2007, it introduced the University of North Carolina Online, a one-stop Web site offering at least 130 degree, licensure and certificate...
programs at public universities.

It is largely an economic strategy. It would be nearly impossible, public education officials say, to construct enough buildings to fill demand.

"There just isn't room," said Rebecca Swanson, NCSU's associate vice provost for distance education.

Across North Carolina, public and private colleges alike are ramping up distance education, which brings in revenue and allows institutions to carve out niches.

NCSU has popular, growing online teacher education and engineering programs, for example. UNC-CH offers a range from nursing and public health graduate programs to a popular program that sends university instructors into prisons for face-to-face instruction.

At UNC-CH, distance-education enrollment is up 24 percent this year, said Norman Loewenthal, who directs the program. Most of UNC-CH's online students are from North Carolina. But in 2008, the university taught at least two students from each of 49 states (missing North Dakota), according to university data.

Universities advertise online programs heavily and offer competitive pricing. Distance education uses a student-as-customer model, with universities tailoring new programs and retooling existing ones to suit the market.

There is plenty of choice.

Russell Diggs of Raleigh first considered an online program through East Carolina University, but its traditional semester schedule didn't fit his schedule. He found what he wanted at Southern New Hampshire University, and he has spent two years working online toward an associate's degree in liberal studies.

"You have to be consumer-minded these days," said Diggs, 46, who was recently laid off from his job producing safety education videos. "You definitely have to shop around."

**eric.ferreri@newsobserver.com or 919-932-2008**

Get $150+ in coupons in every Sunday N&O. Click here for convenient home delivery.

© Copyright 2009, The News & Observer Publishing Company

A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company
UNCG is online for high school students

ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

GREENSBORO - Worried about college costs? How about getting the first semester for free?

An enterprising high school student could do just that through UNC-Greensboro's iSchool, the nation's first virtual early college program.

Here's how it works: Juniors and seniors in participating North Carolina high schools -- there are 249 across the state -- take UNCG courses online and receive both high school and college credit.

A student starting as a high school junior could, conceivably, have 18 college credits complete by high school graduation day.

Oh, and it's free. The state picks up the tab as part of Gov. Mike Easley's Learn and Earn initiative.

"It's a remarkable opportunity for students in high school," said Robert Brown, dean of UNCG's division of continual learning. "Particularly those for whom college was not on the radar."

A similar program is available through more than 40 of the state's community colleges.

UNCG's program is the only one offered online to high school students, and officials there say it can be a great recruitment tool for UNCG and other universities.

"We know from national statistics that if a high school kid takes a college course, he is far more likely to go to college," Brown said.

High schools affiliated with the program screen potential students for the program.

It is proving popular, having grown from about 1,000 students in the fall of 2007 to more than 2,500 last fall. But there's plenty of room for more students; the state provides funding for 12,000 students a year.

eric.ferreri@newsobserver.com or 919-932-2008

Get $150+ in coupons in every Sunday N&O. Click here for convenient home delivery.

ONLINE PROGRAM

Here's where to learn more about the online university program for high school students:

* UNC-Greensboro's iSchool:
  http://web.uncg.edu/dcl/web/ischool/

* Learn and Earn:
  http://www.nclearnandearn.gov/learnEarnOnline.aspx
N.C. State student sentenced in shooting

Crips ordered the attack on fellow student Victim shot multiple times in Crips attack

SARAH OVASKA, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

RALEIGH - An N.C. State University student who was also a Crips gang member was sent to prison Wednesday for shooting another student that a jailed gang leader ordered to be killed.

Ryan Alexander Barnes, 20, will spend the next seven to 10 years in state prison for shooting Clarence Grubbs several times in the stomach and torso just past midnight on July 28. The shooting occurred in a gazebo near the Wolf Village apartments off Dan Allen Drive.

Barnes pleaded guilty Wednesday in the Wake County Courthouse to a felony assault charge charge, said Jimmy Wilson, a Wake assistant district attorney.

Alex Dorsey, a ranking member of the Raleigh-based "Rollin' 30s Set" of the Crips, ordered Barnes to shoot and kill Grubbs while Dorsey was jailed on robbery charges, Wilson said. Dorsey feared Grubbs was going to testify against him in court. But Grubbs seemed to be trying to help Dorsey in his talks with Raleigh detectives, Wilson said.

Dorsey received a 20 to 25-year prison sentence for his part.

Barnes, who hails from the Roanoke Rapids area, had no previous criminal convictions and was doing relatively well at N.C. State, said Nick Saporitas, Barnes' defense attorney.

"He invested his trust in the wrong people," Saporitas said.

Two others have been convicted in relation to the shooting. Leroy Barnes Jr., 19, who is no relation to Ryan Barnes, was the driver the night of the shooting and received a letter from Dorsey about the ordered shooting, Wilson said. LeRoy Barnes Jr. was given a six to eight year sentence for his role in the shooting. Ryan Dorsey's girlfriend, Whitney Blakeney, 20, also an N.C. State student at the time, received probation for picking Barnes up after the shooting and then sending him text messages about the investigation.

Charges are pending against Terrell Grimes, 16.

sarah.ovaska@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4622

Get $150+ in coupons in every Sunday N&O. Click here for convenient home delivery.

© Copyright 2009, The News & Observer Publishing Company

A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company
Early C-sections endanger babies

UNC research finds Caesareans performed at 37 weeks of pregnancy can increase the risk of respiratory problems fourfold

SARAH AVERY, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

Delivering babies by Caesarean section just a few days too early increases the risk of respiratory problems and other complications in newborns, doctors at UNC-Chapel Hill and other centers report today.

The findings, published in The New England Journal of Medicine, add to concerns about the rising rate of C-section births in the United States. Since the mid-1990s, women have increasingly elected to schedule surgery instead of undergoing a vaginal birth, so that C-sections now account for more than 30 percent of deliveries in the United States. The rate in North Carolina is 31 percent.

Much of the increase stems from women having repeat C-sections for their second and third babies -- a choice doctors advocate to avoid a rare but potentially fatal complication when the uterus ruptures at the original incision site. But first-time Caesarean deliveries are also climbing, sometimes just for the convenience of doctor and patient, and other times for medical reasons, such as a stalled labor or a baby positioned feet-first in the womb.

In any case, the timing of the operation is important, today's study finds. Scheduling a delivery at 37 weeks of gestation results in a nearly fourfold increased risk of respiratory distress syndrome, in which the baby's lungs aren't capable of filling with oxygen, compared with babies born at 39 weeks. Newborns delivered earlier than 39 weeks also were significantly more likely to have other breathing problems and an infection called sepsis.

"I think there is something inherent in labor -- probably a signal from baby to mother that the baby is ready to make the transition -- that we choose to circumvent when we schedule an elective, repeat C-section," said Dr. John Thorp, a UNC-CH obstetrician and one of the authors of the study. "I think it points to a role for the baby in the initiation of labor and the baby's readiness to make the transition."

To avoid complications of labor, doctors plan repeat C-sections between 36 and 40 weeks, when most fetuses have developed enough to survive outside the womb. Tests are performed to determine the extent of the fetus'
development, but Thorp said those tests are often not sophisticated enough to determine subtle milestones for breathing and processing food independently.

The researchers examined data from 13,258 Caesarean sections done at 19 medical centers and involving women who had previously had at least one performed and didn't have any complications in pregnancies. The researchers found 36 percent of the C-sections took place before 39 weeks of gestation.

"This may be driven by several factors, including a woman's desire to give birth once term is attained and an obstetrician's desire to schedule the procedure at a convenient time."

'Beneficial to wait'

Such early deliveries, the authors said, should be discouraged, based on the findings of the study. That advice weighed heavily on Shannon Eubanks' decision to schedule the C-section delivery of her baby, Kathleen Conley Eubanks, on Tuesday morning at UNC Hospitals instead of last week, before the new year.

"As an accountant, I would have loved to have the tax break, but with the information we had, based on the study, it was very beneficial to wait," Eubanks said.

The 9-pound girl was the second child delivered by Caesarean section for Eubanks and her husband, Gaston. Their first, a son, was 10 pounds and feet-first in the womb, so he was born by C-section two years ago. Kathleen was also in breech (feet-first) position, discouraging Eubanks from trying for a vaginal delivery.

That option has dwindled for many women who have had one C-section -- a factor contributing to the overall spike in surgical deliveries. In the early 1990s, health leaders, concerned about rising C-section rates, began counseling women to consider vaginal births for subsequent pregnancies. Most were able to deliver vaginally without serious problems, but complication rates were troubling. One study in 2005 reported that 6 percent of women who tried a vaginal birth after C-section had serious complications.

Despite an 8 percent drop in C-section rates between 1991 and 1996, doctors and hospitals grew fearful of being sued, and backed off the recommendations for vaginal deliveries after C-section. Since then, C-section rates have climbed steadily.

Dr. Leon Woodruff, an obstetrician in Raleigh for 32 years, said that encouraging vaginal deliveries after C-sections in the 1990s was a failure.

"That was all driven by policy and insurance coverage, and saying this is something we are requiring you to do as a patient or a doctor," he said. "I think everybody had some experiences where things suddenly went wrong, and mothers or babies were lost. It was just something that most patients and physicians and hospitals didn't embrace."

Doctors' convenience

Others, however, contend that doctors have become too quick to discourage natural childbirth.

Kelley O'Briant, a mother of six in Raleigh, had her first child by C-section 10 years ago, then couldn't persuade her doctor to try a vaginal birth for her second child. Instead, he sent her to a nurse midwife and dropped her as a patient. She had four more children naturally, she said. Now she assists pregnant women and is studying to be a certified midwife.

"Patients' rights are no longer respected," O'Briant said. "I saw one C-section performed for a doctor's convenience -- he said he's got to be home for dinner. Another did it because he was going to a Super Bowl party. Women get all excited about it because they can arrange a time. It's convenience, but that's not what birth is about, nor what having a baby is about."

Thorp says medical interventions have been lifesavers, but may be overused. "It's a really tangled web one weaves when one tries to be smarter than nature," he said.

savery@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4882

Get $150+ in coupons in every Sunday N&O. Click here for convenient home delivery.
C-SECTION TRENDS

INCIDENCE: In North Carolina, the rate of Caesarean sections has risen about a percentage point a year, from 26.8 percent in 2002 to 31.2 percent in 2007. About 41,000 North Carolina babies were born via C-section in 2007.

COST: The average cost for an uncomplicated C-section delivery is $7,735, compared with $4,993 for typical vaginal delivery, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina reports.

HOSPITAL STAY: On average, a woman stays in the hospital 3.4 days for an uncomplicated C-section delivery, compared with 2.1 days for a vaginal delivery, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

WHAT IS A C-SECTION?

A Caesarean section is a major operation in which an incision is made in the mother's abdomen and uterus to delivery the baby. The root of the word is hard to pinpoint, but lore traces it to Julius Caesar, although he was almost certainly born naturally because his mother lived well beyond childbirth. In his day, a C-section was generally attempted only when the mother was dying.

© Copyright 2009, The News & Observer Publishing Company

A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company
Perdue: Economy will block free tuition in '09

By GARY D. ROBERTSON
Associated Press Writer
Posted: Wednesday, Jan. 07, 2009

RALEIGH, N.C. Gov.-elect Beverly Perdue is dialing down some expectations for her first year in office due to the economy and the Legislature.

In an interview three days before her swearing-in, Perdue said Wednesday she knows the state's bad fiscal picture means her 2008 campaign platform of free community college tuition won't happen in 2009.

"I do have tremendous concerns about college affordability and about higher ed in general," Perdue said, but "I don't believe that my first priority and my first accomplishment will be free community college because of the budget. It's much harder than it was this time last year."

The two-term lieutenant governor, who succeeds fellow Democratic Gov. Mike Easley, faces a budget shortfall that could reach $1.6 billion this year. The difference between expected revenues and expenditures could be $3 billion as lawmakers assemble a spending plan for next year.

The community college plan was part of a "College Promise" program Perdue talked up during the campaign that would target children and their parents as early as fifth grade with the pledge of a debt-free college education.

The program piggybacks on a similar Easley initiative the Legislature started in 2007 to eliminate borrowing from financial-aid packages for students in low-income families. Perdue has said she hoped to expand this year.

"I believe there are ways to partner with existing funds that might help more kids go to college," she said.

Perdue said her focus on getting people back to work would displace for now her efforts to raise state's minimum wage. She had criticized Republican nominee Pat McCrory during the general election for being wishy-washy on whether he supported an increase. The current rate of $6.55 per hour will rise automatically to $7.25 in July with an increase in the federal minimum wage.

"My priority is to keep people working. I've got folks that have talked to me who are willing to take a less-than-minimum wage job right now just to get a paycheck," Perdue said.

Perdue, a former legislator, also said it will be difficult to give a government efficiency panel she plans to name as early as next week all of the power she wants it to have.

The governor-elect has said she wants to require lawmakers to vote yes or no on the panel's biennial recommendations without amendments, in a method similar to the one Congress uses to vote on base closing recommendations. But getting legislative leaders to cede power and be put on the spot by the commission will prove difficult.

"It may take us two or three years," she said. "I may never get all that I want, but I am going to begin it."

After releasing the names of her remaining Cabinet members Tuesday, Perdue and her office focused on this weekend's inaugural festivities.
Perdue said television icon and North Carolina native Andy Griffith would again participate in Saturday's inauguration ceremony on the steps of the state archives building in downtown Raleigh. About 5,000 chairs will be set up for the public ceremony, to be followed by the traditional inaugural parade and open house at the Executive Mansion.

Perdue said her speech - only about seven minutes long - will convey an optimistic tone even as the state’s jobless rate is at a 25-year high.

"It's just a tremendous opportunity for us to put together a system that will help catapult us further into the 21st century successfully," she said. "I don't think we can put our heads in the sand."

Inaugural activities organized by the Junior League of Raleigh begin Thursday evening with a reception for Council of State members and a rock concert in downtown Raleigh targeted toward young adults.

The inaugural ball will be held Friday night at the Raleigh Convention Center. A program before the ball will feature Grammy award-winning saxophonist Branford Marsalis. Perdue, North Carolina's first female governor, also released a sketch Wednesday of the red beaded gown she plans to wear to the ball, which she will attend alongside husband Bob Eaves.
Care for kids' hearts

Duke Children's Hospital opens unit exclusively for young patients recovering from surgery

SARAH AVERY, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

A $7 million expansion opening today at Duke Children's Hospital will make more room for children and babies throughout North Carolina who have heart defects.

The new pediatric intensive care unit will add 13 beds for specialized cardiac care at Duke, where more than 420 heart procedures are performed on children each year. The hospital is the state's regional center in the pediatric heart network set up by the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Jon Meliones, director of the pediatric cardiology intensive care unit, said the new space will accommodate the unit's growth. Cardiac procedures for children increased 10 percent from 2007 to 2008 and have tripled over the past five years, a hospital spokesperson said.

Before the expansion, cardiac patients shared bed space with children in a main intensive care unit, which was a squeeze on other critical services.

"If there was a kid in a car accident, and the parents wanted them to come to Duke for the pediatric neurosurgeons, we might not be able to take patients because we were full," Meliones said. He said parents often traveled from throughout the state for scheduled heart surgeries, only to have the procedures delayed by emergencies that took precedence.

"That was a real stress on the families," he said. "This will allow us to get those patients in and get them done."

Meliones said the new space takes into account the unit's communication system, which draws on ideas from the airline industry. A central bay serves as a command post. Doctors, medical students and nurses meet each morning at 7:25 to begin rounds. Everyone who participates is required to visit each patient, without interruptions. Emergencies are handled by designated staff who are the only ones allowed to break ranks.

"It's based on the sterile cockpit," Meliones said, referring to a period during commercial airline flights when pilots cannot be interrupted by flight crews or others. It allows the pilots and navigators to complete a checklist of tasks without distractions, improving safety. That same theory applied at patients' bedsides, Meliones said, improves what doctors and nurses need to know about the patients at a critical point in their recovery.

"There's a lot of communication back and forth" between the surgeons and the intensive care team who tend to the young patients after their operations. "Now there is a checklist, and we go through it very structured."

Hospital staff have been moving patients to the unit this week, and today, the first surgical patient will be transferred directly to the new quarters.

sarah.avery@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4882

Get $150+ in coupons in every Sunday N&O. Click here for convenient home delivery.

**FACTS ON HEART DEFECTS IN CHILDREN**

* 36,000 babies are born with heart defects each year in the United States.

* Congenital heart defects are the No. 1 cause of birth-defect death in infants, though death rates have dropped in the past 30 years.

* Of the newborns with congenital heart defects, 9,200 need surgery or could die before the age of 1.

* Hospitalizations to repair heart defects can run $150,000 or more. The estimated total U.S. hospital costs for 11 congenital heart conditions is $1.4 billion.

SOURCE: AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

© Copyright 2009, The News & Observer Publishing Company

A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company
Champion for students

Comment on this story

The blood doesn't run any bluer than it does in Newport, R.I., where the money is yellow and crinkly, and where well-tuned accents evoke seaside mansions and yacht clubs. From such a setting came Claiborne Pell, the long-time U.S. senator from Rhode Island, who died on New Years Day at the age of 90. He was an elegant presence, faultlessly mannered with just a touch of eccentricity, in his case mirrored by old suits.

But Pell's name is familiar to millions of people. They include but are not limited to the 54 million low- and middle-income Americans who went to college thanks to Basic Educational Opportunity Grants from the federal government, which were passed into law in 1972. Those grants now are called Pell Grants because Claiborne Pell was the person who came up with them.

What a breathtaking contribution to the nation's betterment, through helping to make the dreams of higher education a reality. Pell, who retired in 1997, didn't have to think twice when he was asked to assess his career, starting with his highest accomplishment. It was the Pell Grants, clearly.

Pell, a Democrat who at one point headed the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, also was known to take care of business back home, which is how someone gets elected to six terms in the nation's most prominent legislative body. But that big, farsighted and compassionate accomplishment of college grants helped the whole country.

"Any student who has ever received federal aid has Sen. Pell to thank for his or her education," said Harry Reid, the Nevada senator who is now Senate Democratic leader.

Because of Pell's wisdom and determination, young people who themselves got a chance they might otherwise not have had are now in classrooms educating others. Doctors are in practice. Scientists are at work creating new technologies. Without Pell grants, the horizons of those people might have been kept forever low. The country, and the world, are simply better because of the service of Claiborne Pell.

All rights reserved. This copyrighted material may not be published, broadcast or redistributed in any manner.

Get $150+ in coupons in every Sunday N&O. Click here for convenient home delivery.