THE DAILY CLIPS

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The Greenville Daily Reflector
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Public Forum

Alone and confused after PCMH surgery

It is with concern for other patients and us that we write regarding our stay at Pitt County Memorial Hospital. We have tried to contact PCMH by phone, leaving messages so that we could clarify our concerns through conversation, but to date we have had no response.

Our stay in this hospital was for major surgery. The surgery has been very successful and we are happy with the results. Our concern is with the discharge process. On the morning of our discharge, we were told that all plans for home health services had been approved. We accepted this information from professionals. A nurse came to our room with the discharge papers, and left, leaving us with no assistance for getting out of the hospital. We had to ask for assistance. Finally, a young man came with a wheelchair and helped us with suitcases and boxed home-health equipment to the car. No professional was around us at this departure.

By the second day home, we had heard nothing from a home-health service. After many anxious phone calls, we realized there was a communication problem between the hospital and home-health services. Finally, on our own, we were able to establish contact with a home-health service.

At a three-hour seminar, required by the hospital before surgery, we learned many positive things about PCMH and we expected professional care there.

We were, and are, sadly disappointed.

Although this is not the only issue we confronted, we feel the transition from discharge to home is the one most important to a patient who has undergone major surgery. We write this out of concern for other patients who may experience this problem and for the safety and well being of all patients at PCMH.

LESTER AND ALMA SIMPSON
Emerald Isle
New, larger road signs introduced

By Brock Letchworth

The Daily Reflector

On the day millions nationwide celebrated the life of Martin Luther King Jr., Pitt County officials unveiled new road signs honoring the slain civil rights leader.

More than 400 people attended the annual MLK worship service Monday at Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church, where county officials revealed the design of six new road signs located along a 6-mile stretch of U.S. 264.

The signs are on the east and west sides of the highway near four interchanges on U.S. 264. They flank a stretch between Stantonburg Road and N.C. 11 North. Melvin McLawhorn, vice chairman of the county’s board of commissioners, said he thinks the community will be proud of the signage, and he hopes everyone can put the debates which surrounded them in the past.

“What we are doing is moving forward because we feel like that is important now,” McLawhorn said. “We are honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who stood for positive things, and now it is

Something to say?
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important to move forward for the unity of the people of Pitt County.”

Amidst much debate, the Greenville City Council voted 4-3 in December 2006 to name the U.S. 264 Bypass surrounding Greenville for King. They also decided to change the existing MLK Drive name back to West Fifth Street. County commissioners also signed off on the plan, and the changes were implemented June 29, 2007, when two 3-foot-by-12-foot signs were placed along a two-mile stretch running from the intersection of U.S. 264 and Greenville Boulevard east to the DSM Dyneema plant.

Some officials, including McLawhorn and fellow commissioner David Hammond, felt the signs were not large enough, and they asked state transportation officials about the possibility of getting bigger ones.

Greenville resident Oscar Davis, 70, said he thinks the

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new signs, which measure 5 feet by 11 1/2 feet, will be more visible and should serve their purpose well.

James Wallace, 74, also of Greenville, said he was pleased to see the issue resolved.

“I think it is wonderful that they finally came to a settlement, placing it out along the bypass,” Wallace said. “It’s going to be nice.”

The original signs are still in place, making the total distance of the stretch honoring King more than eight miles.

McLawhorn commended Greenville’s Marvin Blount III, chairman of the Department of Transportation’s Secondary Roads, Maintenance and Equipment Committee, for his work in getting the signs erected.

“I think the citizens of Pitt County are going to be very proud,” McLawhorn said.

Brock Letchworth can be contacted at 329-9574 or bletchworth@coxnc.com.
Duke University to review safety

■ Two students were robbed and another student shot and killed in the past three days.

The Associated Press

DURHAM — Authorities at Duke University said they are intensifying efforts to keep students safe after three crimes in three days.

A graduate student was killed Friday, while two people said a man displaying a gun robbed them in separate incidents near off-campus apartments Sunday night.

Officials said the Duke Police Department is extremely concerned about the type and frequencies of the reported crimes.

Both Duke and Durham police will increase patrols near the campus.

University officials also said they are reviewing safety measures.

Authorities said they do not know if the robberies are connected to the death of 29-year-old graduate student Abhijit Mahato.

He died from gunshot wounds in his apartment.
OUR VIEWS

Safer hospitals ...

Infection rates at hospitals were on a dangerous increase, but smart approaches to germ-fighting are turning the tide.

Health care necessarily is on the agenda in the presidential races, but the issue of serious, sometimes deadly infections spread in hospitals is something the candidates can't address in a meaningful way. Government may have a role, but hospitals and their personnel have to do the hard, tedious work of beating back the germs. Fortunately, as the N&O recently reported, health care institutions in the Triangle region have made progress.

North Carolina doesn't collect and publicly report infection rates, but hospitals such as Duke University Medical Center and WakeMed say that incidents of serious infections such as pneumonia and drug-resistant staph have dropped significantly in the past few years. That's good news and would be even better if the state could better quantify the decreases, by requiring that hospitals report the number and kind of infections their patients contract.

It's not an exact science — for instance, might the patient have contracted the infection before being admitted? — but collecting data would help the state track infections, identify hospitals that tend to have problems and potentially spot outbreaks before they get out of hand.

The current success has come about without exotic medical measures, but instead is the result of common-sense steps such as nurses spending more time washing their hands between encounters with patients.

Infection rates had been rising for several years, but in 1999, the National Institute of Medicine (it advises the federal government on health care) released a report that said up to 98,000 patients died annually because of preventable medical errors, including infections. Some hospital officials were pessimistic that anything could be done about the problem. However, a Boston-based nonprofit called the Institute for Healthcare Improvement took up the cause, challenging hospitals nationwide to save 100,000 lives by reducing infections and other measures. All of North Carolina's 100 hospitals joined the campaign.

Efforts have included checking to make sure that staff members were taking steps known to prevent infections, such as hand-washing. Triangle-area hospitals also have changed some traditional practices. There tends to be less shaving of surgery patients, for instance, which results in fewer nicks that germs can exploit to enter a weakened person's body. Hospitals can't say exactly which steps work best. But WakeMed, for instance, has seen a 50 percent decrease in infections caused by a certain type of catheter.

Chances of this kind of progress being made would have been lower if the National Institute of Medicine had not raised the issue in 1999 and if the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention not kept the problem of hospital-related infections in the public eye. This important public health issue needs to be kept in mind when conservative candidates go on their customary less-government riff as the November elections near.
Culture of violence

Regarding the Jan. 10 article "Gun law urged for college safety":

I commend state Attorney General Roy Cooper for wanting to improve student safety. Unfortunately, I am disappointed the strategy did not address the more prevalent and daily dangers that are often precursors to these massacres — sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.

Prevention efforts are wrongly focusing on access to guns rather than addressing the root of the problem — the ongoing crisis of men's violence against women.

The perpetrators of the recent incidents at Virginia Tech, the Amish schoolhouse and the Colorado high school were all men who intentionally committed abusive acts against women either at the time of the shooting or prior.

Women suffer daily abuse by men on campuses across America: 3.5 percent will be raped each academic year, 13 percent will be stalked during a six- to nine-month period and 21 percent are currently experiencing violence in their relationship. At N.C. State University, this translates to an estimated 480 rapes and 1,783 women being stalked every academic year, with an additional 2,743 in violent relationships at this very moment.

To truly stop these events, we must focus our efforts on dismantling the culture that both facilitates and minimizes violence against women.

Juliette Grimmett
NCSU Women's Center
Raleigh
Patrols step up in Duke vicinity

Killing, holdups jar community

BY ERIC FERREREI
STAFF WRITER

DURHAM — The recent slaying of a graduate student and two armed robberies near Duke University have prompted city and university police to increase their presence around campus.

Local police had no new information Monday on the murder of Abhijit Mahato, an engineering doctoral student found shot dead late Friday in his apartment on Anderson Street, several blocks south of the campus. Nor was there additional news on two armed robberies near the Poplar Manor Apartments just north of campus late Sunday.

University officials huddled Monday, working on plans for one or more memorial services for the slain student while also devising a plan to increase enforcement around campus, said Aaron Graves, Duke’s vice president for campus safety and security.

“It’s just random acts of violence in the city of Durham,” Graves said. “We can’t continue to do business as usual. We have to step it up. It has changed the way we do business.”

Graves said the incidents, taken collectively, have jarred the campus community and have people talking. He said students should be careful but not worry unnecessarily.

“The perpetrator doesn’t know if the person is a student or not,” Graves said. “It’s a crime of opportunity.”

In the first robbery, a graduate student walking near the apartments about 7 p.m. Sunday was approached by a man holding a handgun. The gunman took the student’s wallet, cellular phone and iPod.

Three hours later, a Duke employee walking near his apartment with his wife was robbed of his wallet by a man with a handgun. Police suspect the same man in both crimes.

Paul Slattery, Duke’s student government president, said the university let students know about the incidents swiftly via e-mail. Though most students generally feel safe living and spending time in the neighborhoods on the periphery of campus, the killing and holdups have raised some eyebrows, Slattery said.

“It’s not just something you see in the media that happened in the abstract,” he said. “It happened to somebody who is part of your community.”

Mahato, 29, was in his second of four years at Duke, pursuing a doctorate in engineering that focused on computational mechanics. He earned technology and mechanical engineering degrees from schools in India. He spent two years at the GE Global Research Center in Bangalore, India, before coming to Duke.

The neighborhood surrounding his apartment complex is not one with a high incidence of crime. Police statistics show there were six assaults and five robberies — and no homicides — there in 2007.

In India, family and friends grieved and wondered why anyone would want to shoot a student described as soft-spoken and polite, according to a Monday report in The Times of India. “He spoke to us very often over the phone,” his father, Sitaram Mahato, was quoted as saying. “But never had he communicated any sense of threat to his life.”

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On King Drive, A Dream Deferred
CHICAGO, Jan. 20, 2008

(CBS) On Monday, the country will officially mark the holiday celebrating the life of Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. This year will mark the 40th year after his assassination. His dream of economic and racial equality still lives on. Or does it?

For many living on Chicago's Martin Luther King Drive, the hopes of the slain civil rights leader are more like a dream, deferred, reports CBS News correspondent Michelle Miller.

Timuel Black, 89, has lived on or around King Drive all his life. He remembers Dr. King organizing marches for affordable housing at Liberty Baptist church.

"I think to a great extent, groups that we were fighting for have lost those battles," Black says.

King Drive cuts through historic Bronzeville, where 43 percent of its residents live in poverty, 12 percent are unemployed and the average income per family is just above $27,000.

Black says the decline started in the 1950s when large groups of African-Americans fled the neighborhood's influx of rural blacks from the South seeking opportunity after World War II.

Black adds that the African-American families who left the area were not just economically middle class, but "socially and culturally," too.

That culture clash played out on King streets across the country.

At least 770 roads, boulevards and avenues bear his name, with most running through minority communities in the Southeast.

East Carolina University professor Derek Alderman has been studying King Streets for more than a decade.

"King's name has been seen as stigmatizing," Alderman says. "Opponents fear King's name will not have the same positive connotations that they need for business."

Chicago Alderman Pat Dowell was elected last spring on a platform to revive the area's economy.

"I think it's an uphill battle," Dowell says. "It's not easy."

The public housing high rises that once cast a shadow over King Drive are coming down. In their place, mixed-income town homes and promises of greater economic development. Progress, but not for everyone.

"Some people have been displaced. I mean, change happens," Dowell says.

Building more affordable housing is key to that change, change that will bring business and jobs to the community, she says.

"People deserve to live better," Dowell says.

But it's who is "living better" that concerns Timuel Black

"The lower economic class are worse off than they were during the civil rights movement," Black says.

The dilemma calls into question whether "living the dream" and creating economic progress can be a two-way street.

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