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Knowledge is freedom: Take time to learn about food, nutrition

I encourage people to take time to learn about the nutritional value of the food they eat. People are often surprised by the food and beverages they see in my grocery cart. Rest assured that I do practice what I preach.

I like to tell patients that the more you know about food and nutrition, the freer you are to enjoy a wide range of foods. It’s the overall pattern of what you eat and drink, not individual items that is important.

As Americans, we are helped in this task of understanding our food with consumer protections such as the Nutrition Facts label and menu labeling in restaurants. If you know your personal calorie, fat and carbohydrate goals, you can use these tools to decide if a food or drink fits in your meal plan for the day. And if foods are not labeled, Americans have easy access to nutrient databases in books and on the Web. (I suggest the Calorie King calorie counter as an inexpensive resource.) That’s not true around the world.

I had the fun but odd experience over the last two weeks of having no idea how many calories I was consuming nor what percentage of those calories came from fat, carbohydrate and protein.

We were traveling in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). I found I didn’t recognize many of the fruits, vegetables and grains served. Nor could I name many of the dishes or foods I was served. There were few nutrition labels so I couldn’t calculate the nutritional value of my meals in my head.

Interestingly, I could have easily avoided that situation by going to one

See KOLASA, D3
of the many huge shopping malls in Dubai and eating at the food court. If I were going to do that, I might as well have stayed home. Every American fast-food chain and casual-dining restaurant was represented in the malls. It was no surprise when my colleagues at the University of Sharjah told me that obesity and diabetes were on the rise in the UAE.

This trip to UAE was as a member of an accreditation team for a new clinical nutrition program at the University of Sharjah (UoS), about a 45-minute drive from Dubai. The ruler of the Emirates of Sharjah recognized that the population was increasingly suffering from diabetes and obesity and ordered the creation of a university degree program in nutrition. Sadly, as the people living in UAE move away from their traditional diets, they are experiencing nutrition-related chronic conditions like we are.

The diabetes rate in the UAE is 24 percent (in North Carolina, the prevalence is 8.4 percent for whites, 15.6 percent for African Americans, 12.4 percent for Native Americans and 4.5 percent for Hispanics). I couldn’t find the obesity rate, but as we observed the kids in the malls, it was clear that childhood obesity is on the rise.

Talking with the faculty at UoS, they painted the same picture we see in eastern N.C.: too many meals away from home at fast-food places like McDonald’s and Burger King; too much soda and just too much food. They told me it’s in the Emirati culture to serve lots of food to family and friends. Isn’t it amazing how much alike we are no matter where we live?

I was pretty surprised to find the nutrition students using American text books, referring to our Web sites and teaching our Food Guide Pyramid. I can identify all the foods shown on our food guide pyramid, but as I said earlier, I couldn’t name most of what I was served in UAE.

My dietetic colleagues and I often recommend people experiment with spices to season food instead of using salt or fat meat. While we were roaming through the spice souk (market), a young shopkeeper approached us. When he learned we were American, he was eager to proudly explain to me where the spices were from and how they were used in various cuisines. I wish I could bring him to Greenville to do a workshop for students and patients to teach us how to make our foods interesting in taste when we reduce fat and sugar and salt.

Keeping their food supply healthy may be even more important for the people of the UAE. We walked everywhere that we could but found that people living in the UAE are not into physical activity. The weather was pleasant for our visit, but apparently it is beastly hot most of the year. I saw too much of the unhealthy American influence; I hope they don’t adopt all our bad food habits.

On these international assignments I learn as much as I teach and advise. Back at home, I try to incorporate my experiences into my teaching, so hopefully it’s a win-win for all.

In case you are wondering, we flew into Dubai the day the tallest building in the world, Burj Khalifa, was dedicated but not in time to see the spectacular fireworks. We didn’t have a chance to ride to the observation deck, but we did ride a camel in the dessert.

By the way, the moral of my story today is to value and use the consumer tools that we have to select a healthy eating pattern and reduce our risks for obesity and chronic disease.

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Local Marine Killed In Afghanistan Is Identified

Reported by: Jackie Cutler
Tuesday, Jan 26, 2010 @ 08:23pm

FREDERICK, MD - A Frederick Marine killed after a suicide bombing in Afghanistan has been identified.

Sgt. David J. Smith was part of a Marine reserve unit from Fort Detrick.

Smith graduated from Frederick High School in 2002, then took classes at Frederick Community College before attending East Carolina University.

He served his first tour of duty in Iraq.

Smith was on his second tour of duty when he was seriously injured in a suicide bombing last Saturday.

Smith eventually died from his injuries.

He would have been 26 next month.
Go! Day

Mozart's birthday

East Carolina University's School of Music will present a free concert celebrating the anniversary of Mozart's birthday at 8 p.m. in A.J. Fletcher Recital Hall. Call 328-4788.

See the Go! Guide each Friday for a week's worth of entertainment listings. The Go! Guide also is available online at www.reflector.com.
UNC-CH chooses 'Picking Cotton'

CHAPEL HILL -- "Picking Cotton," the true story of an unlikely friendship between a woman and the innocent man she sent to prison, will be the 2010 summer reading book at UNC-Chapel Hill.

UNC-CH asks all first-year and incoming transfer students to read a book the summer before they enroll and participate in small group discussions the day before classes begin.

A nine-member selection committee of students, faculty and staff began meeting last fall to consider books for the program, now in its 12th year. They chose "Picking Cotton" (St. Martin's Press, 2009) Monday in a unanimous vote, according to a news release.

The book was written by the reconciled pair, Jennifer Thompson-Cannino and Ronald Cotton with help from ghost writer Erin Torneo.

Jennifer Thompson was 22 and a college student in 1984, when an African-American man broke into her North Carolina apartment and raped her at knifepoint. Thompson, who is white, subsequently picked Cotton, then 22, out of a lineup. He went to prison on a life sentence, proclaiming his innocence.

Eleven years later, a DNA test proved Cotton did not commit the crime. UNC law professor Richard Rosen was one of two lawyers who represented Cotton pro bono during that time.
Before research, some reassurance

DURHAM -- Urged on by a veteran of the 1960s civil rights movement, more than 150 older blacks in North Carolina have joined a Duke University drive to enlist more minorities in Alzheimer's prevention research.

Henry Edmonds, 66, a Baptist minister, works with Duke's Bryan Alzheimer's Disease Research Center to overcome longstanding reluctance by blacks to take part in medical studies. Edmonds has succeeded in signing up participants for a long-term Alzheimer's registry by emphasizing Duke's goal of preventing the memory-robbing brain disorder, which strikes blacks at a disproportionately high rate.

"They want to know there is something coming back to the community," said Edmonds, who attended Shaw University in the 1960s and recalls being thrown in a segregated Raleigh jail during a downtown protest. "They want to know that their information is going to be secure and that they aren't going to be seen as guinea pigs."

Previous studies of Alzheimer's disease have not included representative numbers of blacks. Research has attributed that trend to memories of efforts such as the notorious Tuskegee syphilis research -- which for decades denied treatment of the disease in black males to study its long-term effects -- and the long-lived North Carolina program to sterilize black women with mental disabilities.

"People who are in my age group remember and are very hesitant about participating in any kind of a study," said Etheldreda Guion, 68, a black Durham resident who is a former lab worker, public-school science teacher and assistant principal.

"Because of my background in science and the fact that I did work at Duke for six or seven years, I was more open to experimentation," she said.

As a coordinator of the center's African-American Community Outreach Program, Edmonds assisted a successful recruitment drive in Jacksonville and is still talking up the registry in Durham and the Triangle. Efforts have included health fairs in churches and one-on-one talks that went beyond previous efforts to enlist black participants.

"Researchers were not prepared to go into the African-American community and talk to people on a one-to-one basis," Edmonds said. "Too, there's kind of a gap of cultural competence in terms of being aware of how to approach them and talk to them."

Modeled on similar efforts used in cancer research, the registry of hundreds of people who could be quickly available for trials is key to Duke's efforts to develop more effective preventive therapies for Alzheimer's, said Kathleen Welsh-Bohmer, a Duke neuropsychologist and director of the research center. Current treatments at best slow the disease's progression.

Seizing the moment

Recent studies at Duke have shown that two key genes affect peoples' risk of developing the disease and
when it may occur.

The best way to measure how well therapies work is to test them when patients are most likely to develop the disease, researchers say.

"It's where we think people are at high risk of developing Alzheimer's disease in a year or two," Welsh-Bohmer said.

Participants have to be 55 and free of the disease but committed to efforts to stop its growth. They do not have to promise to take part when reached for future studies, which will measure the effects of drug therapies, changes in lifestyle and other treatments.

"I think my hope would be that there is finally a cure for Alzheimer's," said Guion, who makes use of Duke's related education efforts on dementia. "Personally, I get to learn a lot about how to keep myself flexible, to keep my brain involved."

The statewide community outreach program, known as AACOP, works to bring culturally appropriate services and resources to blacks with dementia. It works with black faith-based groups and others to deliver services and to develop trust in the community for the center's research programs.

"When I go to health fairs, I talk about the fact that we are involved in studies that deal with the prevention of Alzheimer's disease," Edmonds said.

"I highlight the fact that this is very new."

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Tar Heel: He's NCCU's music man

DURHAM -- Two years into his tenure as N.C. Central University's band director, Jorim Reid reached a milestone in 2003 when he convinced the university to part with $60,000 for new band uniforms.

Though the band had been formally outfitted at times in the past, it had not for years. The band, tiny at 32 members when he took it over in 2001, had been performing in wind suits, humbling when compared to larger, more decked-out bands from other universities.

Some band members wept when they opened the boxes.

"Some said they slept in their uniforms," Reid remembers.

The uniform purchase was one of several key moments in the progression of the NCCU Marching Sound Machine under Reid's leadership, a slow slog that culminated in November with the band's invitation to the Tournament of Roses Parade next year.

The Rose Bowl, one of college football's preeminent bowl games, is considered "The Granddaddy of 'em all." For Reid, a coveted invitation to its parade in Pasadena, Calif., is a crowning achievement. The parade is considered part of the holy trinity of accomplishments for marching bands, along with an invitation to the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the John Philip Sousa Foundation's Sudler Trophy given each year to the top college or university band in the nation.

The parade invite was an unlikely goal in 2001 when Reid took over a band program on a shoestring budget with little support. The $13,000 budget had to fund the Marching Sound Machine and the pep and symphonic bands. There was little in the way of facilities and there still isn't; Reid's is a rare college band that rehearses at the university's football stadium rather than on its own practice field.

Still, Reid soldiered forward in the face of a community that, he says now, did not appreciate what a successful band could offer the university. So he set out to "literally win souls one by one."

He wrote a 15-year plan of goals and the resources needed to meet them. The Rose Parade was on the list.

At first, Reid faced pushback. Administrators wondered why Reid insisted that all band members had to be included on all trips, a budget killer given the cost of buses and fuel.

To Reid, this was an imperative. The band had to grow and make a statement.

"There are high school bands in Texas with 400 members," he says.

Slowly, Reid began getting results. The band uniforms were a nice score. When the band hit 100 members, Reid made good on a pledge he'd made and shaved his head.

And then came a band showcase in Norfolk, Va., which Reid thinks of now as the band's coming-out
party. There were more than 30,000 attendees, and the NCCU band, still largely an unknown, roused them to ovation.

"The kids didn't know how to handle it," Reid recalls fondly.

Reid comes from music. His family came from Gary, Ind., a music hotbed that gave the world the Jacksons, among other musical families. It bred a rich musical culture of gospel, R&B, blues and jazz. Reid's mother, Rose, was a gospel singer who also played clarinet and piano.

Moving to Florida

The family relocated to South Florida, where Reid grew up playing guitar, piano, drums and woodwinds.

He attended Florida A & M University, a historically black institution in Tallahassee with one of the most famous marching bands in the nation. Reid was drum major, the theatrical leader of the band.

He majored in music and later got a master's degree in music from Florida State. From there, he taught K-12 music while also giving piano lessons and selling pianos.

He came to NCCU as assistant band director in 2000 and took it over a year later. Now 36, the soft-spoken Reid is reluctant to take too much credit for the band's resurgence.

"He doesn't like a lot of limelight," said Ronnie Chalmers, a 2003 NCCU graduate who was Reid's first drum major. "He likes to put the students out front. That attracted a lot of people to the band."

The band now boasts about 200 members. From the beginning, Reid placed a premium on musical performance. A marching band performance is a high-energy, emotional event, but Reid insisted his students be technically sound as well.

While the marching band is the most recognizable NCCU music group, Reid says his student musicians have honed their chops playing with the smaller, less visible symphonic band.

"He's done a phenomenal job of recruiting good students and emphasizing the importance of musicianship," said Chancellor Charlie Nelms, who is now trying to raise the $600,000 needed to send the band to Pasadena for the big parade on New Year's Day. "There are a lot of bands that can put on a good show. But this man understands musicianship, too."

He understands his students, too, perhaps because he, like many of them, came from modest circumstances.

Reid still remembers an all-county band competition he performed in using an oboe borrowed from his school. It was a rudimentary instrument with a "Dade County Public Schools" stamp on it. Next to him, a young woman rolled her eyes at him as she performed on her silver-plated oboe, one Reid says was probably worth $8,000.

At NCCU, few students own their instruments, opting instead to use those owned by the university.

To many students, Reid is something of a father figure offering firm, wise guidance, said Marilyn Clements, president of the band's booster club.

"He can, all in one breath, build a student up and correct him when he's wrong," said Clements, a band
member herself from 1970 to 1974. "He's very concerned and very dedicated to his students, but when they mess up, he tells them."

Chalmers, the former drum major, said that while Reid isn't an overtly rah-rah leader, his drive and leadership inspires.

Looking back at his time at NCCU, Chalmers said he might have even predicted the Marching Sound Machine would make its way to Pasadena someday.

"When [Reid] got here, I knew something great would happen," he said.

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College Linked to Marriage

By Justin Lahart

Maybe education can lead to marital bliss, too. College-educated women were more likely to be married at age 40 than women without a college education, new research showed.

And college-educated women were more likely to say they were happy in their marriages, said economists Betsey Stevenson and Adam Isen of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. The study, to be released Tuesday, was conducted for the research group Council on Contemporary Families. It was based on several data sets and surveys on men and women.

For men, the better marital prospects that come with a college education are longstanding, but for women, this hasn't always been the case.

In 1950, 74% of 40-year-old white female college graduates had married at some point, compared with 90% of white women with just a high-school degree. By 2008, the figure for white women with college degrees had risen to 86%, and it had fallen to 88% for women with only high-school diplomas.

But white women with college degrees who had gotten married by age 40 were much more likely not to have divorced. As a result, at age 40, 76% of college-educated white women were married, compared with 62% of high-school graduates. Among blacks, 70% of college-educated women have gotten married by 40, compared with 60% of high-school graduates. They, too, were less likely to divorce.

A college education also appeared to make women happier in marriage. That's perhaps because both college-educated men and women were less likely to see marriage as a source of financial stability, Ms. Stevenson said, approaching it instead as "a source of personal fulfillment." That could also be a reason divorce rates among the college-educated were lower.
Study Abroad -- Pricey and Priceless

By JENNIFER WATERS

Patti Ristau says she was terrified when she first landed in Seville, Spain, for a semester studying abroad.

Though she had a double major from the University of Wisconsin-Madison that included Spanish and felt sure of herself speaking the language in Mexico and the Caribbean, Ms. Ristau was worried she would be like a taco at a tapas bar in Seville. And she was all alone.

"But it was an amazing, self-enlightening experience," says the 22-year-old. "I found out a lot about who I was being there by myself. And I became a lot more confident about everything, not just my Spanish."

It's a common theme from students who give up the comforts of home and campus to live and study abroad and immerse themselves in another country's culture. They come back changed. And some even admit to becoming more mature -- and with a more wide-eyed view of the world.

"One of the major values of a study-abroad experience is for the student to really come to terms with how he or she navigates an unfamiliar world, particularly in places where a different language is dominant," says Michael Cowan, executive director for the University of California's Education Abroad Program.

"I hear the term 'life changing' a lot," he says. "But not every student comes back dramatically changed. In many cases, the changes are subtle but no less important."

From Italy to India

Study-abroad programs have been around for decades, but they've grown exponentially over the past 10 years. For the 2007-2008 academic year, the latest statistics available, more than 262,000 students studied abroad, up 8.5% from the year before and 77% from the 1987-88 school year, according to the Institute of International Education, which charts the movement with the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

More than 50% of students studying abroad go to Europe, mainly to the U.K., Italy, Spain and France. A growing number are opting for China and India, which saw 19% and 19.8% increases, respectively, in students from the 2006-07 academic year to 2007-08, according to IIE's Open Doors study that breaks down student statistics.

Tuition and Housing

The experience doesn't come cheap, however. And it's not without its tradeoffs.

A general rule of thumb is that the more expensive the school's tuition, the more costly the study-abroad program. Also, the student who spends a lot of money on campus is likely to spend a lot more money overseas.

For students on financial aid, those funds are nearly always transferable to an established program abroad, says
Truett Cates, director of the study-abroad program at Austin College in Sherman, Texas. Some 70% of the school's students participate in the program.

There are other sources of financing available too, such as the government-sponsored Fulbright Program and the Gilman Scholarship Program for undergraduates with a Pell Grant. Some schools have alumni financing or other funds set aside for study abroad.

The living experiences differ too. Some programs offer so-called home stays, where students live with natives of the host country. It could be a young family, an elderly person or a single woman in her 40s. Some programs put students in apartments with landlords and others place them in dorms.

Other Considerations

Here are some other things to consider:

Added costs. It's more expensive than a semester on campus, no matter how it's dressed. There are class fees and living expenses and, of course, travel costs both to get to and from the host country as well as hopping around to other cities and countries. Even baggage fees should be factored into the costs. There are lost revenues, too, for many students who have jobs on campus. And don't forget that many programs require a total payment upfront.

The pesky dollar. Some years are better than others for the value of the dollar against other currencies. This year, the exchange rate looks more favorable than the last two. But you'll need to keep in mind that your dollars may not have the purchasing power you think.

Expensive cities. It's far cheaper to live and study in Granada, Spain, than it is in Paris or London. The increase in the number of students choosing to study in China or India has been partly attributed to the cheaper cost of living in those countries.

Distractions. There are plenty of them, from sightseeing to clubbing. That's why it can be dangerous to go abroad without a budget that you will stick to.

Safety. It's a concern no matter which country you're in and all reputable programs offer comprehensive information on what to be on the lookout for. Schools like the University of California, for example, have risk managers on staff who keep close track of what's happening in other countries.

Resources. The State Department has a Web site with planning tips, cautionary advice and lists of everything from area codes to embassies. Most colleges and universities have a section about study-abroad programs on their Web sites, as do third-party programs.

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