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ECU's Holland rallies spirits for chamber growth

Chamber of Commerce has membership goal of 1,000, turns to athletic director to support membership drive.

By T. Scott Batchelor
The Daily Reflector

With the theme of Membership Madness and a pep rally atmosphere, the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce launched a drive Thursday to increase its membership by 25 percent.

Organizers decked out ECU's Murphy Center like Pirate sports central to ignite a membership fever, with purple pompoms, pennants, Pirate football helmets as table centerpieces, and even the university's athletics director, Terry Holland, as honorary campaign co-chairman and featured speaker.

The business organization has about 800 members who pay joining fees ranging from $300 to $10,000 a year, depending on their size, said chamber president Suzanne Sartelle.

The 2006 membership campaign, whose theme plays on the college basketball frenzy known as March Madness, aims to bring 200 more members on board, bringing the total to 1,000, hopefully by March 23 when the campaign ends, or at least by year's end, Sartelle said.

Telemarketing campaigns have proven effective in increasing chamber membership, she said. But this year the chamber wanted to put on "an old-fashioned membership campaign."

"We just wanted to get back to the basics of having volunteers in the community spreading the word about the chamber," Sartelle said.

About 80 people showed up for the campaign kick-off Thursday morning at the East Carolina University center overlooking the football stadium.

The volunteers formed teams with whimsical names such as The Dirty Dozen, Bank Bulldogs, Long Shots and 1st Place First Citizens.

Though the teams made various wagers with each other — free homemade breakfast served at the office, car washes, drinks at a local bistro — honorary co-chairman Holland reminded all about teamwork.

“We're all in this together,” he said. “(The chamber) reminds us that there's a greater good here than just what's happening in our business.”

Holland, the winningest basketball coach in the University of Virginia's history, said businessmen, like coaches, have to be concerned with the short term by winning the next game.

“But you also have to continue to invest in the future,” Holland said. “There's a greater good here that we've all got to be conscious of. You're selling the future of this community.”

He then led the group to repeat in unison, "If it is to be, it's up to me."

Pitt County Commissioner Jimmy Garris said joining the chamber provides "an opportunity to be part of an organization that is really helping the growth and development of our community."

Greenville Mayor Don Parrott praised the Chamber of Commerce for helping secure a state-of-the-art cardiovascular center.

"I do know one thing: If it weren't for the Chamber, we wouldn't have the cardiovascular center coming to Greenville," Parrott said, lauding the organization for its work in lobbying legislators to yield benefits for the area.

As an added incentive during the membership drive, Sartelle said, volunteers earn "funny money" by selling memberships in the chamber. At campaign's end, they can use that currency to bid on prize packages including Carolina Panthers tickets and cruises.

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What’s hidden below Shearin’s ‘Surface’?

ECU prof in season finale of NBC show

By Kelley Kirk-Swindell
The Daily Reflector

When East Carolina University professor John Shearin auditioned for a part in NBC’s prime-time TV show “Surface,” he hadn’t even seen an episode.

But that changed after he heard he got the part.

Shearin will appear in the “Surface” season finale on Monday as a security supervisor at a biotech manufacturing and storage facility on the North Carolina coast.

“Surface” is an adventure drama about the discovery of a new sea creature that has appeared across the globe. The creature’s discovery affects the lives of the principal characters, including a young Wilmington boy and his family.

News that Shearin had won the role came from his agent on Jan. 3.

“I was asked to be on location Jan. 4 and I didn’t shoot that week,” Shearin said.

While on set, Shearin was fit with his wardrobe, given a military haircut and asked to shave off his beard.

He returned to the Wilmington set Jan. 11 and filmed his part in one day.

Shearin rarely gets the opportunity to take on such roles with his busy schedule as the director of ECU’s Loessin Playhouse and Loessin Summer Theatre, not to mention his regular teaching position with the university.

“As a rule, I try to limit being away from classes to a day or two,” he said.

Originally, Shearin’s part in the script was written as two smaller parts, but the roles were later combined into the character Shearin plays.

“Don’t blink,” Shearin said modestly. “I’m in the teaser before the credits and then I have a nice scene later on.”

During the season finale, a tsunami threatens the coast.

“It’s pretty thrilling stuff,” Shearin said. “There is going to be a cliff-hanger, of course.”

Shearin said that he’s heard rumors of a second season and that locations were being scouted in New Zealand. He quickly added, however, that he has no authority to know whether those rumors are true.

NBC spokesman Chandler Spaulding said that plans for another season are “yet to be determined,” and will depend on what the creators, Josh and Jonas Pate, have to offer next.

The season finale of “Surface” airs at 8 p.m. Monday on NBC.

Among the many other TV shows that Shearin has guested on are “Dawson’s Creek,” “Matlock,” “Doogie Howser, M.D.,” “Designing Women,” “The Young and the Restless,” “Remington Steele,” “Alfred Hitchcock Presents,” “The Facts of Life,” “Falcon Crest,” “The Dukes of Hazzard” and their final episode of “M*A*S*H” (“Goodbye, Farewell and Amen”).

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ECU gets Lost Colony ring

Artifact dates to 16th century

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NAGS HEAD — The retired head of East Carolina University's coastal archaeology office has returned to the university a 16th-century ring he found while exploring ties between native people and the doomed English colonists who first tried to settle the Outer Banks.

Experts think the ring may offer evidence of early contact between the Indians and the first English colony in the Americas. It was discovered in 1998 by former archaeologist David S. Phelps during his last dig before retiring.

Phelps had kept the ring at his Florida home since 2000 along with other artifacts found near Croatan, the only permanent Indian community on the Outer Banks. The site is in Buxton on Hatteras Island.

Phelps said he took the ring and other artifacts with him so he could conduct additional research on them. He said ill health and a hurricane that struck near his home delayed his returning it.

The 10-karat ring depicts a prancing lion, a symbol of authority probably worn by an English settler of high rank.

"Its real value is what it can tell us about the first contact between the Roanoke colonists and the native people," said Charles Ewen, director of ECU's archaeology laboratories in Greenville. "It's definitely a cool artifact."

In 1585, 22 years before the first permanent English colony in Jamestown, Va., Sir Walter Raleigh landed on Roanoke Island and established a settlement of 117 English men, women and children.

The settlers struggled with American Indian attacks, starvation and cold before they disappeared in the wilderness. The only clue left at the settlement site, dubbed the Lost Colony, was the word "CROATOAN" carved into a post.

Phelps found hearths, pipes, coins, beads and bone rings from the Croatan site during digs between 1993 and 1998.

Not long after Phelps found the ring, a researcher matched the ring's crest to the Kendall surname in England. Two Kendalls were known to have participated in the 1585-87 Roanoke voyages, suggesting early contact between American Indians and the English, Ewen said.

Phelps also returned to ECU an iron flintlock, the firing mechanism of a gun that first appeared about 1570.

Phelps has not yet submitted his field notes from the digs, documented the artifacts or published a report on his findings.

Ewen said Phelps is expected to send copies of his field notes soon.
Acute slowness

Regarding the Jan. 31 article "More patients asked to pay first," I say "good luck" to anyone who pays UNC Hospitals up front and then tries to get his money back if his health insurance pays 100 percent of his medical bill.

I was required to pay $250 up front for a procedure on Oct. 17 because I did not have two health insurance policies. How common is it for people to have two health insurance policies unless they are on Medicare?

I have one policy, and it paid the total bill. I called before my procedure to question this hospital policy and was told that is just the way it is. I have made numerous phone calls, worked my way through the confusing recorded mazes, waited on hold (at times it seemed like forever) and just generally wasted a lot of time trying to find out about getting my money back. It has been frustrating trying to get anyone on the phone who knows anything at all about a refund.

To me $250 is not just pocket change. I received one check for $100 on Jan. 13 and as of this writing am still awaiting the $150 balance. I would suggest that if UNC Hospitals is going to charge up front, it should have an uncomplicated way for those who do not owe any money to get their money back in a timely fashion.

Cliff Beasley
Siler City
Blue Cross gives $3 million to train safe hospital practices
The Associated Press
Thursday, February 2, 2006

North Carolina's largest health insurer said Thursday it is giving $3 million to an effort by the state's hospitals to reduce the risk of patient deaths through improved care practices.

The money will be used by the Center for Hospital Quality and Patient Safety to analyze data and to hire trainers to coach health care workers, hospital association vice president Don Dalton said. The trade association created the center last year as part of a national effort to increase safety and efficiency in hospitals.

More than 100 North Carolina hospitals have pledged to implement nationally recognized quality improvement measures.

They include preventing pneumonia in patients who breath with the help of ventilators by elevating the head by 30 degrees. Infections of surgical wounds can be avoided by correct use of antibiotics and established procedures.

Blue Cross said the donation is part of its effort to lower health care costs and improve quality by preventing expensive medical complications.

"The push to improve overall quality and patient safety is the most important initiative in hospitals today," said Dr. Bill Atkinson, president and chief executive officer of WakeMed Health & Hospitals in Raleigh, one of the hospitals who joined the effort.