Residents shaken by Rockingham County double homicide

By Robert C. Lopez
Staff Writer

BETHANY — Patricia Smyth heard howling in the wee hours of the morning Saturday.

“I thought at first that it was a pack of coyotes,” she said Monday. “But it was just all the dogs in the area. To be honest, it was a little scary.”

About 15 minutes later, she heard ambulances racing by.

The next day, she would find out that her neighbors down the road had been shot and killed.

Residents on and near Pinewood Road in the Rockingham County community of Bethany were on edge Monday, reeling from news that Douglas “Troy” French and his wife, La-Donna Moseley French, were slain in their home.

“It’s not something that’s typical of this area,” a neighbor who identified himself as Ronnie said. “There’s a big difference in someone breaking in and stealing your stuff and someone breaking in and going to the extent that they (the apparent intruder) did. It’s a weird feeling.” A Duke Energy truck and several cars were in the driveway of the French house. A dog lay in the yard. A woman at the house declined to comment Monday as did many other people in the neighborhood. One man nearby answered the door with gun in hand when a reporter came calling. He too declined to comment.
Rockingham County Sheriff Sam Page said that he has increased patrols in the area and that his department is working with agents from the State Bureau of Investigation to track down any possible leads.

“I will remain concerned until the person or persons responsible for this crime are brought to justice,” he said.

The Frenches’ 19-year-old daughter, Whitley, called 911 at 2 a.m. Saturday. In the call, she said that an intruder had come into her room and “started jumping on me and they were trying to cover my mouth!”

Her parents heard her screaming and the intruder shot them and ran out. Whitley, a student at East Carolina, said that her arm was bleeding and that she may have been cut. She was treated at Annie Penn Hospital and released Saturday.

The Frenches also had a son, Hunter, who was not there at the time. Page said he believes he was traveling for a sporting event.

Medical personnel arrived at the house quickly, but law enforcement took close to 20 minutes to show up. Page said response times can vary depending on the location of the caller and whether deputies are responding to calls in other parts of the county. The area where the French family lives is fairly isolated and surrounded by farmland.

“I know that when you’re in an emergency every minute can seem like 10 minutes,” he said. “And in a perfect world we’d like to have an officer stationed on every corner, but we can’t afford to do that. But I am proud of the men and women in this department and the work they do.”

Smyth, who moved to the neighborhood in October, said Troy and LaDonna — both Rockingham County natives — were always friendly.

“I can’t say I knew anyone who had a bad thing to say about them,” she said. “There’s no reason or excuse for this to happen.”

Troy French was an air traffic controller in the Navy, from which he was honorably discharged, according to the couple’s obituary.

He had worked for Duke Energy for 22 years at the time of his death. He will be buried with military rites.

LaDonna French was a pianist for the Reidsville Bible Chapel, where the family worshipped. She had worked in patient services for Shapiro Eye Care for more than 11 years.
In lieu of flowers, the family asks that people contribute to an account that will be set up for Whitley and Hunter.

Family visitation will be held from 4 to 8 p.m. today at Reidsville Christian Center.

The funeral will be held at 3 p.m. Wednesday at Reidsville Christian Center. Staff Writer Dioni L. Wise contributed to this report.
Letters: Our best interest

Wade Hargrove's comments in his Feb. 5 Point of View piece about the necessity of increased tuition are right on track. We must find a delicate balance between taxpayer support and reasonable tuition to keep our university system one of the best in the country.

I recently had the opportunity to observe 52 first-year dental students at the new East Carolina School of Dental Medicine as they studied in the simulation laboratory. All of these students were North Carolina residents before they came to dental school, and most will remain here as they begin their careers. This is just one example of the impact that higher education has on the economy and the quality of life in our state.

East Carolina's economic effect on our state exceeds $3 billion a year. All of our state-supported universities make a difference in the lives of our citizens while contributing to our economy.

Raising tuition is painful, but the alternative of a decrease in the quality of education is not in the best interest of North Carolina and its citizens.

Carl Davis
Chairman, Board of the ECU Alumni Association
Raleigh
Reality 101 on campus

BY STAN JONES - The Washington Post

President Barack Obama's plan to make college more affordable is noble in intent but misses the mark in design. If the president and Congress were to focus on the real culprit of high college costs - poor college completion numbers - they could find rare common ground and make substantial headway on a problem that threatens to sink U.S. economic competitiveness.

The president was right when he noted that college is rapidly becoming unaffordable for many. Yet his threats to reduce federal funding to schools that don't cut tuition may open the door for opponents to push back against reforms by invoking accusations of "price controls" and another "big-government takeover."

College presidents point to what seem like reasonable arguments for rising tuition: shrinking state budgets, for one, and the increasing costs of energy, pensions and health care. But if these circular arguments simply go round and round, an important opportunity will be missed.

Data show that time, not tuition, is the enemy of college completion. Today's college students are dramatically different from the archetype of the U.S. undergraduate: A 2009 Public Agenda study drawing on Education Department data found that less than a quarter of U.S. college students attend full time at residential schools. Most students now commute to campus, balancing jobs, school and often family.
Higher education has done little to adjust to the changing needs of this new majority, with the result that students are spending longer than ever in college. The longer it takes to graduate, the more life gets in the way and the less likely that one will ever graduate. More time on campus also means that more is spent on college, adding high costs as another driver of dropouts. In this instance, time is money.

All this adds up to a startling fact: Less than half of U.S. college students graduate, the National Center for Education Statistics reported last year.

There is a way the federal government can take on this issue. Because cutting time cuts costs, the president can achieve the savings he seeks for students and taxpayers by linking federal investments to college results and targeting the greatest obstacles to graduation: failed remediation programs that waste time and money; broken policies that make it hard for students to transfer credits; students roaming the curriculum excessively instead of following structured, career-focused programs; creeping credit requirements; and schedules designed more to please faculty than to help working students.

Colleges should, of course, become more efficient. But raising professors' health care premiums or adjusting thermostats won't boost completion rates. And appeals to reduce tuition through higher appropriations are unlikely to fly in cash-strapped state capitals. The result is that America will fall further behind: The United States once led the world in higher-education attainment; now we trail at least a dozen countries, according to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development data published last year.

Rather than engage in simplistic fights about runaway tuition, let's pinpoint the best methods to reduce time on campus. College completion can be common ground on which the president and Congress focus on costs that are directly related to student learning and success. They should replace blame shifting with irrefutable facts and seek data-driven solutions that can be achieved now to help students afford their dreams while increasing graduation rates.

Washington should also keep this in mind: States are not waiting to boost college completion. Since March 2010, 30 governors have publicly committed their states to setting graduation goals; designing comprehensive completion plans; and moving significant policies to speed student success, including paying colleges for the students they graduate, not simply for those they enroll.
Working across party lines, governors, legislators and education leaders are building a movement. Their success will strengthen state economies while taxpayers get a greater return on their investments and millions more students make it to graduation day. Washington should follow this example.

Stan Jones is president of Complete College America, a Washington-based nonprofit.
Queens University of Charlotte nursing programs assessed

By Karen Garloch

Even after two years of scrutiny, too few graduates of the associate-degree nursing program at Queens University of Charlotte are passing the national licensing exam on the first try.

The Queens program, which has been warned about the problem twice in recent years, remains under review by the N.C. Board of Nursing for another year.

Meanwhile, the state nursing board recently restored full approval to Queens' bachelor's degree nursing program, which was warned about its below-par pass rates a year ago.

Tama Morris, interim dean of the Blair College of Health, which includes the nursing school, said changes have been made to the curriculum, class sizes have been reduced, and a mentor program has been instituted to help students prepare for the exam. But it will take time to see improvement in test results.

"Students who took (the test) in 2011 were graduating in 2010," Morris said. "A lot of these changes were not in place at that time."

In 2009 and 2010, the two-year associate-degree program at Queens' Presbyterian School of Nursing received consecutive warnings from the nursing board. Then last year, the board issued its first-ever consent order, mandating improvements by January 2013.

Nursing graduates from December 2011 are taking the test in the first months of this year, Morris said. "By mid-April we'll have a pretty good idea of how they did."

In recent years, the Queens programs had not met state standards.

In the three-year period from 2008 to 2010, 78 percent of Queens students in the two-year associate-degree program passed the national licensing exam on the first try. The state's requirement, based on the national pass rate, was 83 percent at that time.

From 2009 to 2011, the Queens pass rate for associate-degree students dropped to 75 percent. For that period, the state requirement was 84 percent.
Students in the four-year bachelor's degree program did a little better. The three-year pass rate from 2008 to 2010 was 78 percent. From 2009-2011, it went up to 80 percent.

That didn't meet the usual state requirement, but nursing board officials said a new policy allowed them to give the program full approval because it had shown significant improvement.

"They barely made it, but they made it," said Crystal Harris, the board's manager of education.

Last month, the board received a progress report from Queens officials on the associate-degree program.

"It was an interim report just to make sure they weren't going off track," Harris said. "I think they're going to turn it around."

In the past year, two former leaders of the Queens nursing program have left. Dean Bill Cody is on sabbatical this semester and has submitted his resignation effective June 30. Colleen Burgess, who headed the associate-degree program, resigned in August.

Morris, who had chaired the bachelor's degree program, is serving as interim dean while the school searches for a new dean.

The national licensing exam for nurses is individualized and involves answering increasingly complex questions, Morris said.

"If they get a question right, it gives them a harder question," she said. "This is not a test you can teach to."

Queens purchased a computer program with 4,000 sample questions that gives students experience in taking the licensing exam, Morris said.

Faculty members also have been trained to help students answer increasingly higher-level questions about nursing.

"We have to teach them how to do the harder questions so they get used to thinking that way," she said.

Morris said, she hopes that by next January the pass rate will have improved to 85 or 90 percent.

Garloch: 704-358-5078
Yeardley Love’s death prompted U-Va. police department changes

By Jenna Johnson

Soon after University of Virginia lacrosse player Yeardley Love was found dead in her apartment in May 2010, and her ex-boyfriend George Huguely V was charged in her death, U-Va. police officer Angela Tabler received a new assignment.

Instead of writing parking tickets and directing traffic, Tabler was given the full-time job of educating students, faculty and staff about domestic and dating violence, alcohol abuse and how the university police can help when they or someone they know is in trouble.

Tabler also is in charge of assisting students who are the victims of crime by explaining their options, connecting them with resources, helping them obtain protective orders, holding their hands through the often intimidating court process and frequently calling to check in.

“I look at the community a little differently now,” Tabler said. “People will say to me, ‘Are you the same officer?’ I’m not.”
Tabler’s new job is one of many changes at U-Va. prompted by Love’s death. The university also sponsored a “Day of Dialogue” in September 2010 to discuss dating violence, safety and changes needed in campus culture.

Several student leaders say Love’s death and other incidents at U-Va. have prompted frank talks between friends about tough issues like dating violence, alcoholism and mental health issues.

“My generation, my age is still plagued by that feeling of being invincible,” said Pemberton Heath, 21, a fourth year student from North Carolina who helps to lead ongoing organized discussions between students, faculty and staff about improving U-Va.’s culture. “I think the events of spring 2010 reminded us of the fragility of life.”

The number of those conversations has likely increased this week, as Huguely appeared in a Charlottesville courtroom Monday for what is expected to be a two-week trial.

Tabler now fields dozens of calls — some in the middle of the night — from students worried about a friend or worried about themselves. She also has students referred to her from other departments on campus.

“There has been a jump in calls,” she said. “We get a lot of people who call and say, ‘I’m not sure if this is something...’ We would rather them call and not need us than to not call.”

To Tabler, the increase in calls means that the training sessions and outreach efforts are working. She and others have provided training at new student orientation, handed out fliers at numerous events, visited sorority and fraternity houses and met with residence hall assistants, among a list of other things. Last year she estimates the police department reached 18,600 people.

The message at many of these events: Don’t stand by and do nothing if you or someone you know is in any sort of trouble. It’s a message that’s repeated “over and over and over again,” Tabler said. “We want them to know that it’s okay to talk to the police.”
As the millennial generation enters the workforce, employers report that parents are taking an increasingly active role advocating on behalf of their children.

Images Bazaar/Getty Images

**Helicopter Parents Hover In The Workplace**

by Jennifer Ludden
February 7, 2012

So-called helicopter parents first made headlines on college campuses a few years ago, when they began trying to direct everything from their children's course schedules to which roommate they were assigned.

With millennial children now in their 20s, more helicopter parents are showing up in the workplace, sometimes even phoning human resources managers to advocate on their child's behalf.

Megan Huffnagle, a former human resources manager at a Denver theme park, recalls being shocked several years ago when she received a call from a young job applicant's mother.

"An employee was hired as an IT intern, and the parent called and proceeded to tell me how talented her son was, and how he deserved much more [compensation], and that he could make much more money outside of this position," Huffnagle says.

Despite the pressure, Huffnagle stood firm, and the young man ultimately accepted the job. But the new employee was embarrassed by his mother's phone call, Huffnagle says. "I think there was a little bit of the roll of the eyes and a bit of a blush," she recalls.
Margaret Fiester of the Society for Human Resource Management, or SHRM, says when it comes to parents acting as lobbyists, she's heard it all — from parents calling to negotiate better salaries or vacation time for their kids to complaining when their child isn't hired. "Surely you've overlooked these wonderful qualities that my child has," Fiester says parents often tell her.

Michigan State University surveyed more than 700 employers seeking to hire recent college graduates. Nearly one-third said parents had submitted resumes on their child's behalf, some without even informing the child. One-quarter reported hearing from parents urging the employer to hire their son or daughter for a position. Four percent of respondents reported that a parent actually showed up for the candidate's job interview.

Those types of interventions can backfire, says Feister. "It definitely does not show great leadership or decision-making skills," she says.

Feister says SHRM advises its members that talking to a parent about issues like salary or benefits does not necessarily violate an employee's privacy. On the other hand, she says, it's perfectly legitimate for a company have a policy of speaking only with the employee or prospective employee.

'Get The Parents On Your Side'

If some observers are troubled by this trend, others are urging businesses to accept it.

"You don't want to block the energy of the parent," says Neil Howe, who studies and consults on generational trends for the company LifeCourse Associates. "It's like jujitsu. You just want to channel it in a certain direction."

Howe says boomers are incredibly close to their children, and in his opinion, that's a good thing.

Besides, Howe says, there's little point in resisting engaged parents. School teachers initially tried to push back against helicopter parents a decade ago, Howe notes, but ultimately learned it was counterproductive.

"Every time a teacher [resisted], that parent, who was so attached to their kid, would become that teacher's worst enemy," Howe says.

Today, Howe says, many schools now reach out proactively to parents, going so far as to offer online homework programs that allow parents to monitor a child's progress. Colleges have also adapted, he notes, some even creating an Office of Parent Relations.
Howe says working with engaged parents is often the better approach. "Maybe you can make the parents allies," he says.

"The kids are calling them; they may be living with them; they're relying on the parents for their advice. Why don't you get the parents on your side?"

**More Companies Adapting**

That's exactly what the car rental company Enterprise Holdings aims to do, says Marie Artim, vice president for Talent Acquisition.

Parents are "an influencer," Artim says. "So if they feel more comfortable that it's a solid, stable, growing company with a lot of opportunities, and a good culture and people who care, they're going to feel better about encouraging their son or daughter to consider it."

To that end, Enterprise is happy to send parents the same recruitment packages it sends their children. And when Enterprise interns present their final projects and are considering full-time positions, parents are invited in.

Other companies have even organized a "Take Your Parent to Work" day, to give moms and dads a peek at what child does at the office.

But like many employers, Enterprise does not allow parents to sit in on job interviews. And when a parent shows up at a college career fair to hand out a child's resume? Artim offers a gentle but firm message.

"While we appreciate what you're trying to do," she says, "actually your son [or daughter] would be much better off by showing the initiative, and focusing and committing to their career search themselves."

A solid job hunting tip for both generations.