THE DAILY CLIPS

February 9, 2011

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
ECU competing in blood drive
By Lynsey Horn
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, February 9, 2011

East Carolina University will compete in a blood drive competition in honor of Black History Month.

The National Pan-Hellenic Council with the American Red Cross is hosting a minority blood drive Thursday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. to compete in a regional competition.

“The purpose of the drive is to educate minority donors in the importance of donating blood,” Kasey Shue, American Red Cross Pitt County manager, said. “Blood types tend to be ethnicity-line specific, and 60 to 70 percent of the donor base is Caucasian.”

In 2009, the Red Cross approached the NPHC about hosting a blood drive geared toward minorities. This blood drive was not a competition, but 89 pints of minority blood were collected.

Because of the amount of blood collected, the competition was established among schools in the Mid-Atlantic region, which includes eastern North Carolina and parts of eastern and southern Virginia. This year, there are 17 schools competing including Old Dominion University, William and Mary and University of Virginia. ECU's goal for this year's drive is 70 pints.

“I'm really excited. This year, we're hoping to meet our goal and win,” said Arielle Jones, secretary of the ECU National Pan-Hellenic Council. The council includes the student chapters of Zeta Phi Beta, Sigma Gamma Rho, Delta Sigma Theta and Alpha Kappa Alpha sororities and Alpha Phi Alpha and Kappa Alpha Psi fraternities. Jones, a member of Zeta Phi Beta, is in charge of getting the word out about the drive on ECU's campus.

“We've had a lot of people wanting to volunteer but not a lot want to donate,” she said. There are sign-up sheets for students and those wanting to donate on campus. The drive will be in the multipurpose room in the Student Health Building on ECU's campus, and anyone can donate.

Contact Lynsey Horn at lhorn@reflector.com or (252) 329-9574.
Ron Newton, a professor at ECU, holds his high school yearbook while sitting in his office on campus Monday. Newton and three of his brothers lead their high school basketball team to a state championship in Colorado in 1957. (Rhett Butler/The Daily Reflector)

ECU official inducted into hall of fame
By Mark Rutledge
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, February 9, 2011

Ronald Newton is convinced he would not be an assistant vice chancellor at East Carolina University were it not for the experience he had with high school sports. He played quarterback in football at Mead High School in Mead, Colo., and, along with four of his brothers, led the basketball team to a state championship.

“It really defined me,” the 71-year-old said from behind his desk in ECU's Spilman Building. “I think those experiences, working together as a team and the leadership opportunities I had, really helped me.”

Newton had the rare opportunity to share those thoughts with some young students last month at Mead High School—a brand new facility now, built nearly 50 years after a school consolidation left the old one to be demolished.

He and his 1957 team, along with their now 79-year-old coach, were there to be inducted into the Colorado High School Activities Association Hall of Fame. They raised a banner in the gym honoring the team and its unlikely 55-52 win over Wiggins High School.

Mead was a farming town with about 200 residents when Newton was growing up there. With 19 brothers and sisters, two of whom died young, his family represented roughly one-tenth of the population.

By the time Newton and his triplet brothers Richard and Roland came along, their oldest siblings were on their own.
“The most that were ever around the dinner table at one time were 12 kids and our parents,” he said. “All of my sisters were older, so I had a lot of surrogate mothers that took care of me. There was no lack of discipline.”
Discipline was a way of life for the Newton kids at home, in school and working on various farms in the area.

Cold Colorado winters made the school's warm gymnasium a popular gathering spot for the entire town and surrounding communities.

Newton followed his brothers onto the basketball court, starting organized play in the third grade. By junior high school, they were quite accustomed to playing competitively in front of large, enthusiastic hometown crowds.

The starting five on the 1957 state-champions team was the Newton triplets, their brother Dave and Lyle Schaefer. Newton's wife, Mary, was a cheerleader from another school watching that state championship game in Denver. She recalls the frustrated announcer having a most difficult time keeping the names straight with four Newtons on the court at once.

“It was so funny,” she said. “The announcer finally said, ‘Oh, to hell with it. Newton brings the ball down court and passes to Newton…””

The game was nail-biter, coming down to clutch free throws.

“Our coach encouraged us to become more proficient with free throw shooting,” Newton said. “Every night when practice concluded, he'd have us shoot free throws. One night I made 55 straight.”

That skill came in handy during the championship game. Newton (Ronald) made 10 of 11 free throws to keep his team in the game.

Basketball had been his life up to that point. Newton was so inspired by his coaches, he decided to go into teaching and coaching, which he did for several years. He then went on to earn a Ph.D. and pursue a long career in academia, the most recent 12 years at ECU.

Talking with those high school students back in Mead last month, Newton shared the contents of a letter from his high school football coach.

“He wrote, ‘You'll never be able to relive this experience. It will probably be the most exciting time in your life. It takes a lot of dedication and you'll never have the opportunity to do it better. So do it and do it well.’

“When you get a letter like that,” Newton said, “you don't really know how important it is and how it will impact your life. That's what I told them.”

Contact Mark Rutledge at mrutledge@reflector.com or (252) 329-9575.
New Elon program will help feed the hungry

Elon University President Leo Lambert donned a hairnet and snapped on rubber gloves Tuesday morning to help prepare lasagna for the Campus Kitchen program.

Lambert was assisted by his wife, Laurie, Provost Steven House, Dean Smith Jackson and other top administrators in a lasagna assembly line at Tuesday’s College Coffee, a weekly breakfast event on the campus.

This particular College Coffee kicked off Elon’s Campus Kitchen program, a meal service for community members in need. Elon is one of 26 colleges participating in The Campus Kitchens Project, a national nonprofit based in Washington, D.C., and is the third North Carolina campus to take part in the initiative, following East Carolina University and Wake Forest University.
Run as a service opportunity through Elon’s Kernodle Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement, the program will collect food from campus dining facilities — which are catered by Aramark — and package nutritionally balanced meals for those in need.

Holly Anderson, Campus Kitchen coordinator at Elon, said Allied Churches is the community partner to which meals from Elon will be donated, and each week 25 meals will be prepared. Other universities who have longer-established Campus Kitchen programs prepare meals on a daily basis, and Anderson hopes Elon will one day be able to join them. “Programming will continue to expand over the coming months,” she said.

Lambert agreed that he’d like to see the program expand eventually, but is more concerned with the new program’s quality for now. “We want to make sure we walk before we run,” he said. “We want to make sure that the meals we’re turning out are well-balanced nutritionally.”

In order to ensure the nutritional value of the meals, Campus Kitchen programs are required to prepare meals consisting of one protein, one starch, one vegetable, and one dessert, said Student Director Amber Mathis, a junior at Elon. She said all the dining halls contribute to the meals, which are sometimes supplemented by the Campus Kitchen pantry to ensure all the requirements are met.

Anderson said the Campus Kitchen pantry is stocked by donations from Redbud Farm, an organic farm in Burlington, Aramark and local stores run by Elon alumni. Anderson said that the program will need to expand its food resourcing as it expands its service.

Currently, running the program requires about $50,000 a year, said Lambert, and in addition to donations and food drives, there is a fundraiser run thorough the Office of University Advancement. Anderson was hired in August 2009 specifically to head the program, and until Tuesday, Elon’s Campus Kitchen was run by a formally trained student executive board and student leadership team.

The leadership team is composed of delivery shift leaders and cooking shift leaders. Anderson said each of the cooking shift leaders have been ServSafe certified, and will oversee student volunteers as they handle and package the
meals. All meal preparation and packaging will be done in the downstairs kitchens of the Colonnades dining facility.

Mathis said since summer 2009, she has been helping the Kernodle Center bring Campus Kitchen to Elon and is looking forward to students taking advantage of the service learning opportunity. “I’ve been doing this for three years and now I’m so excited that it’s finally opening,” she said.

© Copyright 2011 Freedom Communications. All Rights Reserved.
ECU's new strength and conditioning coordinator Jeff Connors talks to the Pirate football team on Tuesday. (Justin Falls/The Daily Reflector)

ECU's Connors: Unbridled passion
By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, February 9, 2011

It's rare for a director of strength and conditioning at a university to be so popular, but then Jeff Connors is rare himself.

Connors left the University of North Carolina earlier this winter, jumping at the chance to return to East Carolina, where he says his fondest career memories have been made. As he cracks the whip on the ECU football team during offseason workouts, Connors feels like he's back in the memory-making business.

A master in motivation and molding football players into football winners, Connors insists he doesn't want or expect to be loved by his players.

But keeping his popularity at ECU and in Greenville from permeating the walls of the Pirate football compound — where today players will attempt to complete Connors' stadium workout, which ends with players carrying their workout partners all the way to the top step of Dowdy-Ficklen without stopping — might be his greatest challenge.

“'I've been very happy with the way I've been received, but after we go out and run 300s, that may change,” said Connors, who received a thunderous standing ovation when introduced last week at a signing day event, of the ECU football team. “Everybody knows I didn't get into this to be popular.”

If football is really about results, Connors is the man to build the foundation for getting them.
His job requires building toughness and muscle, and there is never an easy-going way to do that, but Connors' love affair with the Pirates makes him perhaps the happiest football drill sergeant in America at the moment.

“I have a very strong personal interest in this program,” said Connors, who spent a decade as ECU's head of strength and conditioning before his 10 years in the same capacity in Chapel Hill. “Sometimes in your life you realize what you have an unbridled passion for, or who you have an unbridled passion for, and this is it for me.

“Because of that, I am going to set a standard that is only the best, and I am not going to compromise that standard for anybody. The expectation is going to be off the chart.”

One of the initial tasks for Connors has been actually developing that chart. The previous ECU staff, he said, did not base its training on test results.

Connors, conversely, believes testing players on a regular basis is vital in developing standards and establishing new goals for each player. He keys on the basic areas of jumps, sprints and lifts, and has devised his own power quotient — a player evaluation system based on the results of five vertical jumps, three broad jumps and one power clean lift divided by the player's time in the 40-yard dash.

So intent on jumping in with both feet with the Pirates' workouts, there hasn't been much of a getting-to-know-you time for Connors and his players thus far.

“We dove right into this thing,” he said. “We were more concerned with going ahead and getting the training even beyond learning people's names. I'm actually still learning names.”

An expert in speed training, Connors has emphasized the basics of running first, which is a cornerstone of the offense of second-year head coach Ruffin McNeill. That training, according to Connors, includes straight-ahead running, uphill and downhill running, pulling and pushing sleds and wearing weighted vests.

“I want to produce, and that being said, it has been a tremendously positive attitude and work ethic, and that's already been here,” Connors said. “I'd like to think that's always been here because that's what the Pirates are known for.”

While at ECU in the 1990s, Connors helped to brand the Pirates as a team that wouldn't lose games in the fourth quarter. More than a decade removed from that stint, he still firmly believes that the Pirates' successes will be the product of tireless training and in-game effort.

“My slogan this year is, ‘Can't nobody do what we do,’” Connors said. “We're not there yet, because right now, other people can do what we do. But when August rolls around, I expect that slogan to be the truth.”

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@reflector.com or (252)329-9595.
Cary teen's death points to flu's danger

BY SARAH AVERY - Staff Writer
The death of a healthy Cary High School senior last week from H1N1 flu is a reminder that the strain can still be lethal to young people, health officials said.

When the novel virus hit in 2009, college-age people seemed especially vulnerable. The age group is generally less inclined to get vaccinated or to seek treatment when sick.

"One of the reasons we see severe disease in young adults is it may be their body's reaction to the virus," said Dr. David Weber, an infectious disease specialist at UNC-Chapel Hill.

"It's not the virus itself - it's having a vigorous response, and some of the damage may be from their own immune system."

So far this year, four youngsters in North Carolina have died - fewer than the seven child deaths reported last year during the pandemic outbreak but twice as many than are reported in typical flu seasons. All told, the state has recorded 10 flu deaths this year, and not all from H1N1.

In the case of Katie Taylor, an 18-year-old from Cary who aspired to attend Meredith College next fall on her way to becoming a veterinarian, the virus damaged her heart.
Her father, Roy Taylor, said Katie seemed to suffer mild symptoms - a runny nose and coughing - for about two weeks, but then became dehydrated and developed achiness and pain. She went to WakeMed last Wednesday and was admitted. The next day, her condition worsened, and she was driven by ambulance to UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill.

Katie died that night as doctors battled to stop oxygen deprivation caused by her failing heart.

"It was very fast," Roy Taylor said. "I want to make people aware that this is a very serious strain and they shouldn't take it lightly."

Taylor said he also wanted to urge people, especially young people, to get vaccinated against the virus, which still has not peaked in North Carolina. State health officials said Tuesday the uptick in cases is likely to continue for another two or three weeks, hitting a high in early March.

"There is still time for vaccination," said Dr. Zack Moore, state public health epidemiologist, adding that a flu shot takes about two weeks for full protection to kick in. Flu shots are still available at many area pharmacies, plus for free at public health clinics.

"I don't make a lot of predictions, but I can promise you there will still be flu circulating two or three weeks from now," Moore said.

He said this year's flu shot is well-matched to the three strains of virus circulating most widely, but one of the complications this year is that all three strains are making the rounds. Last year, the pandemic H1N1 virus dominated, crowding out nearly all other strains.

Among the circulating viruses is a strain of influenza B, which usually causes less severe illness. This year, however, it's hitting hard.

Weber, at UNC Hospitals, said last year's reprieve from strains other than H1N1 may have diminished immunity to influenza B and others. He said UNC Hospitals runs its own laboratory analyses of influenza, catching more subtypes than the state lab, and is finding that about half of cases it's seeing are influenza B.
The hospital also reports that more than 12 percent of people seeking care in its emergency department are complaining of flu symptoms, including fever, cough and sore throat.

That's higher than the nearly 9 percent of emergency room visits with flu-like symptoms reported through the state's surveillance system.

"Even for people who have had the flu, or think they had flu, I'd still recommend getting the vaccine," said Moore, the state epidemiologist. "If they actually had flu, they had one strain of three circulating, so they could be infected with others."

sarah.avery@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4882
Dealer to UNC frats gets prison time

BY JESSE JAMES DECONTO - Staff Writer

HILLSBOROUGH—Jonathan Plymale's mother hung her head, crying, as a judge announced her son would be going to prison, rather than serving probation as his lawyer had requested.

Plymale pleaded guilty Tuesday to two counts of cocaine trafficking and other drug-dealing charges. He will spend 20 months in prison and will be on probation for five years after that. He faces more than six years in prison if he violates the terms of his probation.

Plymale was running a coke business out of his girlfriend's apartment in downtown Chapel Hill. A 2009 UNC-Chapel Hill graduate, he was living in a rented room in the former Pi Lambda Phi fraternity house in Fraternity Court and supplying cocaine to fraternities and sororities. His girlfriend, Eliza Vaughan, also pleaded guilty to cocaine trafficking and is serving three years' probation.

Plymale said his own addiction got out of control and led him into dealing, and he wants to repay family, friends and the UNC community, which have supported him.
"It's been a dark place for me this last year," he said. "I can't really begin to describe how ashamed and remorseful I am."

In September 2009, Chapel Hill police raided Vaughan's apartment and found eight individuals, some of them using cocaine. Plymale had come back from Burlington with $4,000 worth of bulk cocaine, and some in the group had been dividing it into 1-gram packets for individual sales. Most were just buyers and charged with possession.

"If the officers had arrived a little earlier, they would have actually found them in the act of cutting it up," said District Attorney Jim Woodall.

Officers seized nearly 200 grams of powder cocaine worth thousands of dollars. As Plymale told them they would, they also found an additional 120 grams in small baggies plus $2,000 cash in his room in the frat house.
Plymale's attorney Wayne Harrison implored the judge to consider his client's quick confession and cooperation with police. Superior Court Judge Jim Hardin cut back from Woodall's proposed three-year prison sentence because of Plymale's efforts.

"He did the wrong thing," Harrison said. "But from the instant of his apprehension, he began to try to do the right thing."

jesse.deconto@newsobserver.com or 919-932-8760
Phil Miatkowski, a student at Lake Forest College in 2008, created a Facebook group to keep his friends informed about legislation in Illinois. Colleges and universities are trying to enhance social networking opportunities for students to help reduce dropout rates.

Can Social Networking Keep Students In School?

by Larry Abramson

Last fall, students were psyched to be starting school at Coppin State University in Baltimore.

But if history is any guide, 40 percent of them will disappear before next year — victims of this school's low retention rate.

This is the time of year when students are wondering whether they will get accepted to the college of their choice. But many colleges and universities are asking themselves another question: How can we hold onto students once they're enrolled?

Some schools see half their freshmen disappear because so many drop out. To address this problem, some schools build physical spaces — new dorms with themes and clubs to make sure new students get involved. Those strategies can help.

But schools are now trying to keep students coming back with a new twist on a familiar tool — social networking.
A School-Based Facebook
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has also been looking for new approaches to keep students coming back.

The foundation is announcing Wednesday that it will invest $2 million in Inigral — a company that is trying to build virtual college communities by creating school-based Facebook sites. It's the first time that the Gates nonprofit foundation has bought an actual equity stake in a for-profit company.

"What we do is make sure that when students arrive they either already have assembled or [can] very quickly assemble that kind of peer support," says Michael Staton, the CEO of Inigral.

Peer support means a ready network of friends. Only students can gain entry to these sites, and they're invited in the moment they are accepted to a school. The feel is supposed to be small and intimate, unlike schools' fan sites on Facebook, which are open to everyone and don't inspire much networking.

Merging Social And Academic Lives
Columbia College, an arts and media school in Chicago, has been experimenting with the site. Samantha Saiyazonsa, a sophomore in journalism, says it helps her merge her social and academic lives.

School clubs can also use this technology to recruit and discuss campus issues. The sites are there for students, not for administrators.

Schools pay what they say is a nominal fee for Inigral to build the site. Colleges and universities hope they will get paid back through greater student engagement and higher retention rates. Ultimately, that saves schools money because they don't have to replace all of those dropouts.

"We have some indication that first-time freshmen who opted to participate in the application were highly more likely to be retained for the next semester," says Kari Barlow, an online administrator who spearheaded Arizona State University's experiment with Inigral's Schools App.
Hard To Measure The Impact
It will be tough to show whether these efforts played any direct role in students' decision to stay or go — that's a subject for future research. And, of course, many students are out of reach for this and other approaches.
Alexis Thompson, a sophomore who uses Columbia College's site, says it only works if kids work with it.

"That's something that they have to be proactive about," she says. "So, the Facebook app can be there. But unless you're being proactive and you want to go out and look for things like that — it's really on the student."

The Gates Foundation investment seems to show that the organization is casting a wide net to find new ideas that will improve outcomes in higher education.
Grades are the currency of education — teachers give them to students, administrators grade teachers and states often assign grades to schools.

Now U.S. News & World Report is planning to give A through F grades to more than 1,000 teachers’ colleges, and many of the schools are unhappy, marching to the principal’s office to complain the system is unfair.

Numerous education school deans have protested that the ratings program’s methodology is flawed since the program was announced last month. In a letter last week, officials from 35 leading education colleges and graduate schools — including Columbia, Harvard, Michigan State and Vanderbilt — denounced an “implied coercion” if they do not cooperate with the ratings.

U.S. News and its partner in the ratings, the National Council on Teacher Quality, an independent advocacy group, originally told schools that if they did not voluntarily supply data and documents, the teacher quality group would seek the information under open-records laws. If that did not work, the raters planned to give the schools an F.

That got the attention of educators.

Brian Kelly, the editor of U.S. News, said the push-back from education schools was evidence of “an industry that doesn’t want to be examined.”

“These teacher-education programs are hugely important and not very well scrutinized,” Mr. Kelly added. “This is coming at a time when you have this tremendous national push for improvements in teacher quality: Who’s teaching the teachers?”

But in response to the criticism and to many schools’ refusal so far to cooperate, Mr. Kelly rescinded the plan to flunk schools for which data could not be obtained.
“We regret that language,” he said Tuesday. “It’s really not the way we want to be doing business.”

Education schools have faced criticism frequently over the years. They are faulted by a recent wave of education advocates as emphasizing education theory over hands-on classroom training, and as graduating teachers with weak academic skills.

The federal education secretary, Arne Duncan, has said that many, if not most, teacher-training programs are mediocre. “It is time to start holding teacher-preparation programs more accountable for the impact of their graduates on student learning,” Mr. Duncan said in a speech in November.

Kate Walsh, the president of the National Council on Teacher Quality, said that school principals were “deeply dissatisfied with the quality of candidates coming through their doors.” Ms. Walsh said that rating education schools would be valuable in teacher recruitment.

The project, which will cost $3.6 million and be completed next year, is being underwritten by education foundations including the Carnegie Corporation and the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation.

The education deans who have voiced objections do not echo the familiar complaint of college presidents about U.S. News rankings — that they have turned undergraduate admissions into an arms race.

Rather, the deans object that the teacher quality council’s methods for arriving at ratings are not transparent enough and are not supported by research. To arrive at its ratings, for example, the group has requested detailed information about courses, textbooks and admissions selectivity.

“Nobody’s against being evaluated or having good reliable information available to the public about how we can prepare better teachers,” said Mary Brabeck, dean of New York University’s school of education. “But what will we know if everybody uses the same textbook? What will that tell us about how you prepare highly effective teachers?”

Sharon P. Robinson, president of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, said the ratings were focusing on superficial “inputs”
rather than “outcomes,” like how well teacher graduates perform in the classroom.

“We have serious skepticism that their methodology will produce enough evidence to support the inferences they will make,” said Dr. Robinson, who has advised her 800 member schools that the U.S. News project is “not worthy of your involvement.”

Ada Beth Cutler, dean of the education college of Montclair State University, said she would not cooperate, based on her earlier negative experience with a National Council of Teacher Quality survey. That convinced her that the group “has little interest in making responsible and evidence-based judgments,” Dr. Cutler said.

“There are a significant number of teacher-preparation programs in the country doing an outstanding job,” she added. “A large number are doing an O.K. job, and a smaller number ought to be shut down. But given the current climate, which is extremely critical of university-based teacher preparation, it would be terrible to put out results that are not valid and reliable and based on un-vetted criteria.”

Ms. Walsh, whose group was founded “to provide an alternative national voice to existing teacher organizations,” according to its Web site, said that short of sitting in on a college’s classes for a year, her evaluation methods are sound.

She called the colleges’ critique of her focus on course content “a bit of a red herring.”

“What they want us to do is hold off until a perfect assessment is in place,” Ms. Walsh said.

In response to the criticism, her group has scheduled a Webinar on Wednesday to explain its methodology, for which 450 educators are signed up.

The ratings system, which will employ 17 standards, was field-tested in smaller studies the teacher quality group did in Texas and Illinois.
The Illinois ratings, which gave high marks to only a handful of 53 schools in the state, were criticized on release last year even by some schools that earned good grades.

An alliance of organizations representing education schools said in a statement at the time that grading them based on textbooks and course descriptions was like “evaluating the quality of restaurants by only requesting that menus be mailed to the evaluator — without sampling the food or visiting the site.”

Penelope L. Peterson, dean of the education school at Northwestern, whose school got an A minus, the highest grade in the state, said she would participate in the national ratings, despite some misgivings.

Dr. Peterson learned last year that it was better to ensure that Ms. Walsh’s group got the information it sought than to have it rely on what is publicly available on a Web site. Had Northwestern not provided extra information, Dr. Peterson said, it would have received a zero on four of the evaluation standards.

But Deborah Curtis, dean of the education college at Illinois State University, took away the opposite lesson from her efforts to communicate directly with Ms. Walsh’s research staff.

“They did not want facts,” Dr. Curtis said. “They had their own preconceived notions.” She said the teacher quality group, whose advisory board includes advocates for charter schools and alternative-teacher training programs like Teach for America, is biased against traditional teacher colleges.

It did not listen to Illinois State’s efforts to clarify its data, Dr. Curtis said, and so the education school, the largest in state with 5,000 students, stopped cooperating.

Its grade was an F.