THE DAILY CLIPS

February 26, 2009

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
ECU police explain use of force, demonstrate TASERs

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

Officers from the East Carolina University Police Department welcomed students and visitors to Mendenhall Student Center Wednesday for a presentation on the school's use of force policy.

It was the first of several planned sessions to keep students informed about their police department, what they do and how they do it, Chief Scott Shelton said.

“We chose this subject and the TASER as the topic of our first session because we thought it would generate a good bit of interest among the students,” Shelton said.

The TASER is an electronic control device used by law enforcement officers for a safe, moderate level use of force when resistance to an officer is encountered, Shelton and his officers said.

Lt. Curtis Hayes, a defensive tactics instructor for the campus police department, explained the state statutes that determine appropriate use of force by all officers. N.C. General Statute 15A-401.D allows for the appropriate use of force to either make an arrest or prevent escape from custody, Hayes said.

The officer described a "continuum of force" that officers apply in response to aggression, based on the circumstances and the level of resistance they encounter.

Levels of resistance vary along the continuum, Hayes said, from passive resistance all the way to deadly force.

An officer’s response can vary from simply being present and visible to the level of deadly force as well, he said.

As a tool for overcoming resistance, the TASER is considered an “interim level” weapon for an officer, grouped with chemical spray and a baton, said Lt. Jason Sugg, Hayes’ colleague and a training officer in the use of TASER devices.

After detailed explanations about the weapon’s technological capabilities, Sugg got down to the part of the lecture all the students came to see, an actual demonstration of the device on a live subject, in this case his colleague, Lt. Hayes.

With two electrode darts connected to his clothing, Hayes grunted, gritted his teeth and rose on his toes in uncontrollable convulsions when Sugg pulled the trigger only briefly. Bolstered by two assistants at his side, Hayes recovered his senses rather quickly, but was not smiling about the experience.

The charge begins with 50,000 volts but is reduced as it travels to 1,200 volts or less once it penetrates the body, Sugg told the audience.

Jenna Jones, a junior criminal justice major, supported the logic of the TASER as a reasonable use of force.

“Students, like any other group of people, can be dangerous at times, and this is an open campus, so anyone can come on it. I hate walking around campus at night. I carry pepper spray,” Jones said.

Chief Shelton told the students that the department is conducting the series to further their knowledge of the campus police department. He solicited their recommendations for future topics.
By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

A national collaborative aimed at improving the health, wellbeing and self-sufficiency of first-time, low-income parents and their children has made its way to Pitt County.

County officials announced Wednesday that the grant-funded Nurse-Family Partnership, a nurse home visitation program, will be implemented some time during the next year in Pitt County.

First-time mothers involved in the program will begin meeting with a registered nurse early in pregnancy and continue receiving home visits through the child’s second birthday.

Nurses will work with their clients to achieve three goals: improve pregnancy outcomes by helping women engage in preventive health practices such as better dieting and the reduction of usage of cigarettes, alcohol and other illegal substances; improve child health and development by helping parents provide responsible and competent care; and make parents self-sufficient by helping parents develop a vision for their future, plan future pregnancies, continue their education and find work.

The program will be administered by the Pitt County Health Department which will rely on referrals by several agencies including the REAL Crisis Center, Carolina Pregnancy Center, Pitt County Social Services, the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and the county’s school nurse program.

When evaluating the need for the program in the county, Health Director Dr. John Morrow said local health department leaders were focused on finding ways to reduce the repeat pregnancy rate among local teens. Nearly 30 percent of adolescents who were pregnant in 2006 were having at least their second child, he said.

Morrow also noted officials found that out of 2,196 county births in 2006, 48 percent of them were to women enrolled in Medicaid and more than half of the Medicaid births were to first-time mothers.

“Launching this partnership and adding it to our maternal-child continuum of care is an investment that will allow us to enhance the work we have been doing as we work to reach out to young first-time mothers, their families and their health care professionals,” Morrow said. “Overall, we see the partnership as a win for our community and a way to help improve the lives of families and their children.”

Nancy Stone, outreach nursing coordinator for the county health department, said the program will require administrators to hire four nurses, a processing assistant and an interpreter.

They expect to serve around 100 clients annually.

“There is potentially the need for a lot more,” Stone said.

It typically takes around nine months to get a full case load, according to Veronica Creech, Southeast regional manager for the partnership.

Pitt will become the eighth county in the state to administer the program, joining Guilford, Wake, Mecklenburg, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford and Robeson. The partnership also serves families in 24 other states.

“We all know there are many vulnerable first-time parents in our community that do not have access to adequate parental or early child health care,” said Melvin McLawhorn, chairman of the Pitt County Board of Commissioners. “Having this access can make all the difference in a child’s health and development. This partnership will bring a change to the way things are done in Pitt County.”
The program is funded through a collaboration that includes the Duke Endowment, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, the North Carolina Partnership for Children Inc., and Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina.

Partnership representatives say that during the program's 30-year history mothers and children who participated have consistently demonstrated better prenatal health, fewer childhood injuries, fewer subsequent pregnancies, reduced child abuse and neglect, less involvement with crime and improved maternal awareness and school readiness.

"This program is designed to accomplish exactly what our county needs," said Ray Rogers, a Pitt County resident and member of the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust advisory board. "We need a program that will not only have a significant impact on the community, but also one that is bold and will allow our young people to understand the value of proper care."

Contact Brock Letchworth at bletchworth@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9574.

Copyright 2009 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved. - -
ECU dedicates Hospitality Management facility

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

East Carolina University students now have access to a state-of-the-art kitchen in the Hospitality Management Department.

The department dedicated the brand new Golden Corral Culinary Center in the Rivers Building on campus Wednesday evening.

The center will be used by hospitality management and nutrition students. It also will be used for cooking classes open to the public and summer cooking programs for local children.

"Hospitality management makes a huge difference to the work force that stays in North Carolina," said ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard. "We are preparing graduates for the work force for whom there are jobs."

Jaceline de Chabert-Rios, hospitality management chef instructor, said the new center is a giant step up from the former small kitchen with electric stoves from the 1970s.

The Golden Corral Culinary Center features eight cooking stations with convection ovens and gas ranges similar to what students will encounter when they graduate and begin working for resorts and hotels, she said.

While ECU does not have a culinary program, the hospitality management students need to learn what happens in the kitchen, Chabert-Rios said.

"This is like working in a professional kitchen as opposed to a home kitchen," she said. "Students need to understand what goes on in the back of the house because that is where a lot of the costs are."

The center was funded and equipped by various companies.

James Maynard, founder of Golden Corral, said the center will allow ECU to be a better leadership university.

"The chancellor is committed to East Carolina being a leadership university and this is a great place to build on that," Maynard said. "I expect to see leaders come out of here."

Will Forsyth, chair of the department of nutrition and dietetics at ECU, said the center will be used to teach nutrition students and local children from area schools.

"Children will come in here from schools and we will use food concepts to enhance math and science," Forsyth said. "We are going to be able to use this laboratory for so many projects that will benefit the community, our students and ECU."

The lab opened in early January. It will be used extensively by entry-level hospitality management students, about 60 per semester.

ECU has the largest hospitality management program in the state. The degree in hospitality management offers three tracks for students: food and beverage, lodging and convention/event planning.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9665.

Copyright 2009 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved. - -
Pitt County picking up unpaid medical bills

By Tom Marine
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

Pitt County was forced again to pick up the bills of residents who did not pay for their medical treatment by writing off bad debt for the local health department.

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners approved writing off about $190,000 of delinquent accounts last week, which have been inactive for at least two years. Many of the accounts no longer have current address information for the holders, according to the board’s agenda, and the write off will save the county postage expense for mailing quarterly statements.

Pitt County Health Director John Morrow said the county previously wrote off $41,000 in 2003, for accounts without valid social security numbers, and another $43,000 in 2006.

“This is a problem we deal with all the time for collections on treatment,” Morrow said. “This isn’t new and it’s a chronic problem. There is a fraction that we are unable to collect from.”

To help with its collection efforts, Morrow said Pitt County began using the North Carolina Debt Set-Off Clearinghouse to collect the funds for its unpaid services. He said by providing the patient’s social security number to the program, the county could be reimbursed through the person’s state tax refund.

Pitt County Finance Director Melonie Bryan said the county has received more than $830,000 from the clearinghouse since 2002, including roughly $182,000 that would have been considered bad debt by the health department. In total, she calculated Pitt County had submitted claims for $10 million of unpaid debt.

“It’s an additional tool we use,” Bryan said, referring to the clearinghouse. “It’s one more way to try to keep down our taxes and make sure those people are paying their share.”

Bryan, noting the difficulty involved with securing unpaid debt, said she would rather set up payment plans than resort to forced collections.

“At some point, you’ve exhausted your collection efforts,” she said.

Any client who had an account written off and returns to the health department for any service will have the account reactivated, according to the agenda.

As the economy continues to slump and residents struggle to stretch their budgets, Morrow said the health department could experience an increase in demand for its services. He also said many of the health department’s services are free, such as communicable disease control.

Morrow stressed the importance of providing preventative services in Pitt County, despite the bad debt that may accumulate.

“We don’t want to push people away from preventative and needed services,” Morrow said. “It is much cheaper on our health care system than patients needing intensive care in the emergency room. Public Health is an excellent investment for our health care dollar.”

Contact Tom Marine at tmarine@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9567.

Copyright 2009 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved.
Perdue says slash more

Agency heads told to cut 9 percent

ROB CHRISTENSEN, Staff Writer

Gov. Beverly Perdue on Wednesday ordered deeper cuts in state government, a move that could potentially jeopardize such North Carolina icons as "The Lost Colony" outdoor drama in Manteo and the High Point Furniture Market.

Taking steps to manage North Carolina's growing budget crisis, Perdue asked state agencies to reduce their budgets this year by as much as 9 percent. Last month, Perdue had asked for 7 percent cuts.

To help keep the state out of the red, Perdue also said she would dip into various special funds for $300 million that had been reserved for school construction, textbooks purchases and water and sewer projects.

"The state constitution requires that I balance the state budget," Perdue, a Democrat, said in a statement, "and I will do that while protecting public education as much as possible."

The move was described as necessary by other state leaders.

"It's going to get worse," said Senate leader Marc Basnight, a Manteo Democrat. "She is moving to 9 percent. She will have to go higher. We are in a major, major economic crisis. It's affecting the vast majority of North Carolinians. The government needs to respond and do so quickly."

In asking for deeper cuts, Perdue did not specify which programs are on the chopping block.

But her office released a list of some of the programs that her budget office is considering for cuts.

Those include seven smaller and older state prisons, eliminating inmate road crews, cutting out the Capitol Police investigative unit, ending state funding for "The Lost Colony" and the Shakespeare Festival, ending state funding for the High Point Furniture Market, eliminating the Labor Department's apprenticeship program and ending state meat and poultry inspection programs.

The Lost Colony is one of the cultural jewels in the district represented by Basnight. But he said it was fair to consider "The Lost Colony" along with other state programs.

"It definitely says the situation is getting worse," said Elaine Mejia, a budget analyst with the N.C. Budget and Tax Center. "A 9 percent cut is really significant. You're approaching the point where you will see real reductions in services and layoffs of employees."

As a precautionary step, Perdue said she would transfer up to $300 million from several special accounts into the state's General Fund. Those are $100 million from the Clean Water
Management Trust Fund, $100 million from the Public School Building Capital Fund, $50 million from the Public School Text Book Fund and $50 million from the lottery reserve fund.

June Atkinson, the state superintendent of public instruction, said she agreed with the steps.

"I think the action she took today illustrates what a dire place we are in," Atkinson said. "It is more important to pay the salaries of teachers and others. With textbooks and constructions, those purchases can be deferred to another time."

rob.christensen@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4532

Comics, crosswords and coupons... only in The N&O print edition. Subscribe Now!

© Copyright 2009, The News & Observer Publishing Company

A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company