THE DAILY CLIPS

March 6, 2012

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by East Carolina University News Services:

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 Services
Web site at http://www.ecu.edu/news
252-328-6481
A North Carolina Lifeline Built on Shifting Sands

By CORNELIA DEAN

RODANTHE, N.C. — Last August, when Hurricane Irene sliced across the Outer Banks, it cut Highway 12, Hatteras Island’s lifeline, in two places. Engineers rushed to repair the damage, filling and repaving a washed-out stretch of roadway here and building a bridge over a newly formed inlet a few miles to the north.

The road reopened on Oct. 11, to the cheers of anglers, would-be vacationers and the innkeepers, restaurateurs and merchants whose livelihoods had taken a huge blow.

But the winds and waves that shape the coast were already gnawing at the new bridge. By January, engineers were reinforcing its southern approach with sandbags and rock trucked in from the mainland, in hopes of keeping the road open until a more permanent fix could be designed and built.

The Outer Banks are home to some of the nation’s most celebrated beach communities. The road that links them, also called N.C. 12, offers an
extreme example of the difficulty of maintaining houses, condos, roads and other infrastructure in the face of a climate-driven rise in sea level.

By some estimates, at least 70 percent of the ocean coastline of the lower 48 states is threatened by erosion. But the outlook here is unusually gloomy. In 2009, a federal report on erosion in the Middle Atlantic states predicted that if the sea level rises two feet this century — an estimate that many experts call optimistic — “it is likely that some barrier islands in this region will cross a threshold” and begin to break up. The report, produced by the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Geological Survey and other agencies, said the Outer Banks were particularly threatened.

Already, Highway 12 floods repeatedly and is often cut by storms. Maintaining it “is totally a lost cause,” said Stanley R. Riggs, a coastal scientist at East Carolina University who is an author of a new book, “The Battle for North Carolina’s Coast,” which describes in depressing detail the difficulties of keeping the road open. “It will bankrupt the state,” he said.

But people who live and work on the Outer Banks say abandoning the road would make life impossible.

“You would see people with nothing left,” said Eddie Williams, who was born and raised on Hatteras Island. He manages the Paint Box, a gift shop in the village of Hatteras. “It would be devastating,” he said.

Beth Smyre, an engineer for the State Department of Transportation who is leading the planning effort, acknowledged the pessimism coastal geologists bring to the issue. “We try to take into account all these different opinions,” she said. But she added: “There are people living out there, there are tourists visiting out there. We have to provide a reliable and safe transportation system out there.”

According to a 2011 state report, coastal tourism brought $2.6 billion to the state’s economy in 2009, supporting 50,000 jobs.

“We have an obligation to keep this access in place,” Jerry Jennings, a district engineer with the transportation department who had overall charge of the road repairs, said in October, as he watched crews put the finishing touches on the $11 million-plus repair projects he described as temporary fixes.

He added, “Our employees, fortunately or unfortunately, have a lot of experience dealing with Highway 12.”
Irene’s attack on Highway 12 came as North Carolina was already confronting a number of issues relating to the fate of the Outer Banks.

Last summer, the state confronted what engineers called “advanced deterioration” of the Herbert C. Bonner Bridge, which carries the highway from Nags Head to the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, on the north end of Hatteras Island.

Some geologists suggested replacing the bridge with a system of ferries from the mainland. Others suggested maintaining a road link with a causeway or “long bridge,” looping into Pamlico Sound, an idea that the federal Fish and Wildlife Service endorsed as the best long-term option.

The state opted for a replacement bridge that will run right alongside the existing span; planning is under way.

Robert S. Young, a coastal geologist who is head of the Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines at Western Carolina University, calls the project “our own little bridge to nowhere.”

“They can engineer that bridge so well that it can withstand a Category 3 or 4 hurricane,” Dr. Young said in a telephone interview. “The barrier island it is connected to cannot.”

North Carolina has long been a leader in coastal protection through its ban on coastal armor — like seawalls and revetments — which, while it may protect a particular house or condo, almost inevitably degrades or even destroys sandy beaches. But last summer the State Legislature voted to loosen that prohibition, allowing owners of threatened buildings to protect them with “terminal groins,” structures built out into the surf to trap sand.

Dr. Young said he feared that the move was the beginning of the end for the armor ban. Meanwhile, he is among the coastal scientists who have been recruited to help assess beach damage caused by the groins, a prospect he said was “just so depressing.”

Efforts continue to maintain beaches by dredging up sand and pumping it onshore, a chronic activity on the Banks and elsewhere on the coast. When Irene struck, a project was under way in Nags Head, where houses routinely end up in the surf when a storm passes. As expected, Irene washed some of the new sand away.

Barrier islands like the Outer Banks are inherently unstable. Waves typically strike these islands at a slight angle, creating currents that pick up sand and carry it along the coast. The wave energy along the Outer Banks is unusually
strong; by some estimates 700,000 cubic yards of sand, enough to fill 70,000 average-size dump trucks, moves along that stretch of coast every year.

At the new bridge, evidence of this process appeared even on opening day, in the form of long-necked black water birds called cormorants perching on a spit of sand that had formed near the north side of the bridge. That spit had not been there a few days before, said Pablo Hernandez, the transportation department engineer who managed the bridge work.

“It’s very difficult,” he said. “This whole thing has been constantly moving and shifting.”

As he spoke, waves were already starting to cut sharply into the sand at the bridge’s southern flank, an area the engineers later reinforced. In nature, barrier islands respond to rising seas by gradually moving inland. They erode on the ocean side but expand on the bay side, as storms wash sand across them or as inlets form and the current carries sand toward the bay.

Since the middle of the 20th century, though, people here have done a lot to thwart this process.

During the Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps built an artificial dune that survives today along much of the length of the Banks, blocking the overwash of sand. When the islands do wash over, leaving Highway 12 covered in sand, people bulldoze the sand back to the beach. When inlets form, they fill them.

The results have been predictable: Eroding on the ocean side and unable to move inland, Hatteras Island has narrowed. “Every year and every storm, the vulnerability just increases,” Dr. Young said.

Andrew S. Coburn, associate director of the shoreline program at Western Carolina University, noted in an interview that Irene was barely hurricane strength when it struck the Banks. “It was a pretty weak storm, but that’s not discussed,” he said. “You don’t hear that. Nobody talks about the fact.”

A weak storm — or even an unusually high tide — can cause big trouble for Hatteras Island, where Highway 12 is a two-lane road usually only a few feet above sea level. The reconstruction job in Rodanthe (pronounced roe-DAN-thee) is the second here in two years; a stretch was similarly repaired in 2009 when surging waves stranded oceanfront houses in the surf, including the house featured in the movie “Nights in Rodanthe.” The house was moved.
The state has moved the highway itself four times since the 1950s, said Dr. Riggs of East Carolina University. His book offers a “minimal estimate” of $93 million for the cost of maintaining it since 1983, a figure that does not include the new work.

Replacing the Bonner Bridge will leave the state “locked into trying to protect that highway for 60 to 70 miles,” he said. “They cannot do that. It will not last.”

The inlet spanned by the new bridge is not the first at that site. And in 2003, Hurricane Isabel cut still another inlet across the southern end of Hatteras Island; the Army Corps of Engineers filled that one.

In the coming decades, Dr. Riggs predicted, major storms will turn many parts of the Banks into underwater shoals or flats that are above water only at low tide. If Highway 12 were abandoned and the islands allowed to find their natural equilibrium, he writes, the resulting villages would be “situated like a string of pearls on a vast network of inlet and shoal environments.”

They could be reached by ferries, as are two other islands on the Banks, Ocracoke and Bald Head.

Dr. Young noted that until Bonner Bridge opened in the 1960s, all travel to Hatteras Island was by boat. “Martha’s Vineyard, Nantucket, Block Island, Puget Sound — people love to ride the ferry,” he said.

Not everyone agrees. NC-20, an organization of public officials and businesspeople from 20 waterfront counties, acknowledges that sea level has risen about 7 inches in the last 100 years, but rejects the idea that the situation is worsening. And it says that altering road or other infrastructure plans would be “unscientific” and “portends financial disaster.”

In 2010, however, a panel of experts convened by the North Carolina Coastal Resources Commission concluded that a sea level rise of about three feet is likely and should be “adopted as the amount of anticipated rise by 2100, for policy development and planning purposes.”

But people do not like to hear that message, especially after a storm, said Mr. Coburn, also a ferry advocate. “Are we at the point where we cannot sustain it? With Highway 12, I don’t think we are there yet. But there will come a day.”
Others could follow NCCU's lead in cutting degree programs

Some of the University of North Carolina’s 16 campuses are re-evaluating their academic programs in the wake of severe budget cuts and anticipation for what's likely to be tough fiscal years ahead.

North Carolina Central University's Board of Trustees two weeks ago approved a measure to cut several of its degree programs and to consolidate several others.

“We have about 14 programs that will be affected in some way or another," Chancellor Charlie Nelms said. "About five of them will be discontinued.”

Nelms said the cuts come to those with lower enrollment, including the entire undergraduate and graduate sociology programs, public administration, art and French programs. Several others will be merged, such as the math and physics programs and English and foreign languages. (See which programs have been affected.)

The changes will involve cutting as many as 15 full-time administrative jobs and numerous part-time adjunct professors.

“We will be able to free up about $2 million that we will be able to reinvest in our highest priority, and that is to retain students,” Nelms said.

Students currently enrolled in the programs to be eliminated will still be able to earn their degree, and the university will continue monitoring all remaining programs, striving for efficiency.

“For those programs that remain, we are telling them they must develop enhancement plans,” Nelms said.

Fayetteville State University has cut five undergraduate programs and two graduate programs over the past three years.

In addition to restructuring its administration to save about $50 million, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has also consolidated or cut
programs over the last several years and will continue looking at other low-productivity programs for more possible cuts.

North Carolina State University is nearly a year into a similar evaluation of all its academic programs.

East Carolina University formed a committee formed last May to consider more than 50 options for altering the academic structure that could involve consolidating schools and possibly eliminating programs.

Budget cuts have already forced the 16 university campuses and the School of Science and Math in Durham to drop more than 3,000 employees and reduce library hours at Appalachian State University and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, according to a UNC system report.

The UNC Board of Governors earlier this month approved a tuition increase plan that will raise fees by an average of 8.8 percent on UNC system campuses for the 2012-13 school year.

Reporter: Mike Charbonneau
Web Editor: Kelly Gardner
Copyright 2012 by Capitol Broadcasting Company.
More than four years after the bottom fell out of the economy, sending the country into a devastating recession, signs of recovery can finally be seen across the country, including here in Pitt County. Unemployment is slowly inching downward, new businesses are locating to the state and a growing confidence seems to be taking root among consumers.

The recovery is fragile, however, and officials on the local, state and national levels must do all they can to nurture and assist it. There are many strategies that can help accomplish that worthwhile goal, and a healthy measure of urgency is needed in the coming weeks to put those plans into action in order to see results sooner rather than later.

President Barack Obama appears in Charlotte on Wednesday to discuss the economic recovery and his administration’s goals and aspirations for advancing it. Those proposals will be critical to the coming legislative session in Washington and the issues at the heart of the presidential campaign to come. However, it is Raleigh and Greenville where decisions promise more immediate impact locally.

Investment in education, particularly the state university system, helps cultivate a talented and trained workforce that is attractive to potential employers. Colleges also serve as incubators for commerce by providing jobs and developing the type of intellectual capital needed for fledgling businesses. Their health directly influences the health of a region’s economy.

Overhauling the state’s tax code, a much discussed proposition that has struggled to gain traction in Raleigh, could address the concerns of the business community about the relatively high corporate tax rate. Gov. Beverly Perdue proposed lowering that rate last year, but was rebuffed by Republican legislators who favored a reduction in the sales tax. North Carolina’s inordinately high gas tax is also an impediment to economic recovery and inflicts tremendous harm on family finances.

Pitt County’s focus on the biotech industry looms as an area ripe for success. East Carolina University, and the Brody School of Medicine in particular, should be key in those efforts. And Greenville’s recent election offered
promises of action on economic development, and residents have seen those plans take shape with the creation of a position focused solely on the city’s needs.

These are not complex or complicated ideas, nor is this an exhaustive list of proposals that can assist the recovery. But job creation and economic health remain the leading concerns of the public, and the area is in need of explicit focus by those in elected office.
Mr. Darth D. Akins, 50, passed away Sunday, March 4, 2012, after a long and courageous battle with chondrosarcoma. The funeral service will be held at 1 p.m. Wednesday at St. Peter Missionary Baptist Church. The family will receive visitation at 6 p.m. today at 2223 Sorrell Lane, Winterville. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the Coach Roggeman Research Fund, Leo Jenkins Cancer Center, Room 178, Greenville, NC 27834. Online condolences made at Rountree_family_mortuary@yahoo.com. The family would like to extend a special thank you to Dr. Paul Walker and the staff at the Leo Jenkins Cancer Center.

Published in The Daily Reflector on March 6, 2012
UNC urged to cut Rush radio ties
BY BROOKE CAIN - bcain@newsobserver.com

As Rush Limbaugh continued to apologize Monday for his derogatory comments about a female college student last week, the Triangle radio station that bears the conservative talk show host's name was being targeted by some who question its relationship with UNC-Chapel Hill athletics.

WRDU-FM - which calls itself "Rush Radio" - mostly stayed silent Monday about the controversy that has caused at least 10 national advertisers to drop or suspend their business with Limbaugh's program. The outcry was sparked last week when Limbaugh took on Georgetown University student Sandra Fluke after she testified in support of President Barack Obama's contraceptive health care coverage plan.

For three days on his nationally syndicated program, Limbaugh speculated to his millions of listeners about Fluke's sex life, calling her a "slut" and a "prostitute." Limbaugh issued an online apology Saturday and apologized again on the air Monday afternoon.

Dick Harlow, the Raleigh market manager for Clear Channel, which owns WRDU 106.1, said his station respects the right of Limbaugh to express his opinions.

Tar Heels on WRDU

In response to a request for an interview, Harlow released the same statement being offered by other Limbaugh stations:

"WRDU is committed to providing its listeners with access to a broad range of opinions and commentary without condoning or agreeing with the opinions, comments or attempts at humor expressed by on-air talent," the statement said. "The contraception debate is one that sparks strong emotion and opinions on both sides of the issue. We respect the right of Mr. Limbaugh, as well as the rights of those who disagree with him, to express those opinions."

Harlow declined to answer questions.

Though much of WRDU's program consists of conservative talkers such as Limbaugh, Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity, the station also is home to UNC's
Tar Heel Sports Network in the Triangle, which broadcasts UNC basketball and football.

On Monday, James Protzman, a liberal blogger for BlueNC.org, spoke out about UNC's association with Rush Radio and emailed UNC Chancellor Holden Thorp asking him to rethink the relationship.

"It doesn't make a lot of sense for the flagship university of North Carolina to be associating itself with the kinds of things we hear on Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh," Protzman said.

Protzman, who attended graduate school at UNC and whose wife, Jane Brown, is on the journalism faculty at the school, said he hadn't gotten a response from anyone at the university. There also are petitions and a movement on Facebook and Twitter to put pressure on UNC to reconsider its agreement with Rush Radio, he said.

Tar Heel Sports Properties, which owns and operates the Tar Heel Sports Network, is an independent contractor of UNC. Tar Heel Sports Properties has more than 50 affiliates, including WRDU, that air the games.

Rick Steinbacher, associate athletic director for marketing at UNC, said in a statement that the network's affiliates include a diverse assortment of non-game programming.

"The University, the Athletics Department, and Tar Heel Sports Properties does not control or in any way endorse the normal programming of any of the stations that air the game broadcasts including the recent comments by Rush Limbaugh aired on WRDU 106.1," Steinbacher said in the statement.

Rush Radio is a 100,000-watt FM station with reach across the Triangle and surrounding counties. Its owner, Clear Channel, is the parent company of Premiere Radio Networks, the company that syndicates Limbaugh's show and other conservative talk shows. Clear Channel also owns G-105.1, 100.7 The River and Kiss 93.9 in the Triangle.

During his comments about Fluke last week, which began Wednesday and continued through Friday, Limbaugh said Fluke has "so much sex it's amazing she can even walk" and suggested that she post sex videos online in payment for having the government subsidize her birth control. "If we are going to pay for your contraceptives - and thus pay for you to have sex - we want something for it. We want you to post the videos online so we can all watch," he said.

**Comments denounced**
The comments were denounced by many Democrats and some Republicans. President Obama called Fluke to offer support, and some of Limbaugh's advertisers began defecting.

In his written apology Saturday, Limbaugh said that he chose the wrong words in discussing Fluke. On Monday's show, he said he doesn't think Fluke is "either of those two words" that he previously used.

So far, the apology hasn't seemed to have any effect on the advertisers. Four of the 10, including AOL and Allstate, decided to drop their ads after the Saturday apology.

Of the advertisers who have left him, Limbaugh told listeners Monday, "They've decided they don't want you or your business anymore. So be it."

Limbaugh, who according to media reports makes an estimated $50 million a year, went on to blame liberal critics: "Advertising is a business decision, it's not a social one. Only the leftists try to use extortion, pressure, threats to silence opposing voices. We don't do that."

David Minter, a writer in Carrboro, says he has taken to Twitter, Facebook and email to express his concerns directly to Limbaugh's advertisers. Minter says he isn't advocating a boycott of advertisers; instead, he's "encouraging sponsors to take responsible action and realize they are hurting their brands."

**What Fluke says**

Fluke appeared on ABC's talk show "The View" on Monday to react to Limbaugh's statements about her and his apology.

"I don't think that a statement like the one he issued saying his choice of words was not the best changes anything," she said. "Especially when he's under significant pressure from his sponsors who have begun to pull their support from him."

Fluke said the issue is not about the government paying for contraceptives, but about requiring private health insurance companies to cover it. She added that she sees Limbaugh's campaign against her as an attempt to silence women who think contraception is an important health care need that should be made accessible and affordable.

Cain: 919-829-4579
No longer with Rush
Advertisers who have pulled or suspended ads from Rush Limbaugh’s radio show over his comments in the past week:
Allstate
AOL
Carbonite
Citrix Systems
LegalZoom
Pro Flowers
Quicken Loans
Sleep Train
Sleep Number
Tax Resolution Services

Rush Radio
On January 1, 2010, Rush Limbaugh’s radio program began airing in the Triangle on WRDU-FM 106.1 after 21 years on WPTF 680-AM. WRDU switched to an all-talk format and renamed itself "Rush Radio." Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity also have nationally syndicated programs on WRDU. Owner Clear Channel has at least three other stations branded as "Rush Radio," including "Rush Radio 94.5" in Greensboro and talk stations in Boston and New Orleans. Limbaugh’s show airs live each weekday from noon to 3 p.m. EST.
ACT debuts in N.C. schools today
Standardized test to measure high schools
Sharpen your No. 2 pencils.

Today, for the first time, about 100,000 high school juniors in public and charter schools across North Carolina will take the ACT college entrance exam.

The ACT will be a measuring stick in the state's new accountability system to be implemented this year. The scores will be one way of evaluating how well the state's high schools perform, and how North Carolina stacks up against other states.

Students also can submit their ACT scores when they apply to college.

About the ACT: The test contains four curriculum-based multiple-choice sections in English, math, reading and science. There also is a writing component. Students are given about four hours to complete the test. The ACT is scored on a scale of 1 to 36, with 36 being the highest composite score.

Why the ACT? Late last year, the State Board of Education approved the ACT as a requirement for high school juniors.

State leaders have said the ACT was chosen in part because it includes a section on science.

At least a half-dozen other states require the ACT, including Michigan, Illinois and Kentucky.

What it costs: The test is free for students, but it will cost the state $4.6 million this year. The state will pay for it through savings from eliminating a 10th grade writing test. The federal government allowed North Carolina to eliminate the 10th grade test, which had been required under the No Child Left Behind law.

What about the SAT? The SAT has long been the dominant college entrance exam in North Carolina, and it is likely to remain a big player. Both tests are accepted by colleges and universities across the nation.

Some institutions, including Wake Forest University, no longer require a standardized exam.
What about other tests? The state also gives other tests as part of its accountability system. In December, 10th graders took the PLAN test, an ACT precursor. WorkKeys is a career-readiness test that will be administered this year to high school seniors who concentrate on technical education.

Tips for the ACT: The ACT folks offer these tips for doing your best: read the instructions and questions carefully; pace yourself without spending too much time on a single question; use a No. 2 pencil with a good eraser; on difficult questions, eliminate possible incorrect answers and then make an educated guess; answer all questions - there is no penalty for guessing; if there is time, recheck your work.

Staff writer Jane Stancill
Preschoolers in Surgery for a Mouthful of Cavities

By CATHERINE SAINT LOUIS

SEATTLE — In the surgical wing of the Center for Pediatric Dentistry at Seattle Children’s Hospital, Devon Koester, 2 ½ years old, was resting last month in his mother’s arms as an anesthesiologist held a bubble-gum-scented mask over his face to put him under. The doctors then took X-rays, which showed that 11 of his 20 baby teeth had cavities. Then his pediatric dentist extracted two incisors, performed a root canal on a molar, and gave the rest fillings and crowns.

Devon’s mother, Melody Koester, a homemaker from Stanwood, Wash., and her husband, Matthew, an information technology manager, said they began worrying about brushing Devon’s teeth only after Mrs. Koester noticed they were discolored when he was 18 months old. “I had a lot on my mind, and brushing his teeth was an extra thing I didn’t think about at night,” she said.

The number of preschoolers requiring extensive dental work suggests that many other parents make the same mistake. The Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention noted an increase, the first in 40 years, in the number of preschoolers with cavities in a study five years ago. But dentists nationwide say they are seeing more preschoolers at all income levels with 6 to 10 cavities or more. The level of decay, they added, is so severe that they often recommend using general anesthesia because young children are unlikely to sit through such extensive procedures while they are awake.

There is no central clearinghouse for data on the number of young children undergoing general anesthesia to treat multiple cavities, but interviews with 20 dentists and others in the field of dental surgery suggest that the problem is widespread.

“We have had a huge increase in kids going to the operating room,” said Dr. Jonathan Shenkin, a pediatric dentist in Augusta, Me., and a spokesman for the American Dental Association. “We’re treating more kids more aggressively earlier.”

But such operations are largely preventable, he said. “I have parents tell me all the time, ‘No one told us when to go to the dentist, when we should start using fluoride toothpaste’ — all this basic information to combat the No. 1 chronic disease in children.”

Dentists offer a number of reasons so many preschoolers suffer from such extensive dental decay. Though they are not necessarily new, they have combined to create a growing problem: endless snacking and juice or other sweet drinks at bedtime, parents who choose bottled water rather than fluoridated tap water for their children, and a lack of awareness that infants should, according to pediatric experts, visit a dentist by age 1 to be assessed for future cavity risk, even though they may have only a few teeth.

And because some toddlers dislike tooth-brushing, some parents do not enforce it. “Let’s say a child is 1½, and the child screams when they get their teeth cleaned,” said Dr. Jed Best, a pediatric dentist in Manhattan. “Some parents say, ‘I don’t want my little darling to be traumatized.’ The metaphor I give them is, ‘I’d much rather have a kid cry with a soft toothbrush than when I have to drill a cavity.’ ”

Dental decay often starts with a dull ache that may be mistaken for teething. That is why parents do not realize their child’s teeth are infected until they break or the pain becomes so acute that the child cannot sleep, said Dr. Joel Berg, director of the Center for Pediatric Dentistry, a joint venture since 2010 between the University of Washington and Seattle Children’s Hospital, which built a surgical wing because of the demand for oral surgery for preschoolers.
With a cooperative child, a cavity — or even many — can be treated in a
dentist’s office with an injection of local anesthesia and an episode of “The
Backyardigans” to distract patients.

But dentists routinely recommend general anesthesia for preschoolers with
extensive problems, particularly if they will not even let X-rays be taken.
The cost to parents for dental restoration under general anesthesia for a child
ranges from $2,000 to $5,000 or more, depending on insurance coverage and
the amount of work, several dentists said.

Dr. Megann Smiley, a dentist-anesthesiologist at Nationwide Children’s
Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, is used to hearing parents question the need for
general anesthesia to fix their children’s infected teeth. “It seems like putting
a match out with a fire hydrant,” Dr. Smiley said. “But if any of us tried to
get 12 teeth treated, we wouldn’t think that’s small.”

The dental surgery center at Nationwide has three operating rooms, which
staff members and local dentists used to treat roughly 2,525 children in
2011, 6 percent more than in 2010. The average age of patients is 4, and
most have decay in six to eight teeth, she said.

“The most severe cases have 12 or 16, which is seen several times a week,”
Dr. Smiley added.

Using general anesthesia on healthy children has risks, including vomiting
and nausea, and, in very rare cases, brain damage or death. Using anti-
anxiety drugs to relax a child coupled with local anesthesia for pain has
risks, too, including an overdose that could suppress breathing.

Hannah Schwartz of Brooklyn refused general anesthesia for her 3½-year-
old daughter, Alice. By then, one of Alice’s eight cavities had already been
treated in a dentist’s office using a papoose board to immobilize her from
head to ankle with straps. Her daughter screamed, “Take it off me!” for the
20-minute procedure, said Ms. Schwartz, a nursing student.

Afterward, “I left the room and burst into tears without Alice seeing,” she
said, adding that she would try a third option, laughing gas.

Of course, the lack of money or insurance can be an issue, but several
dentists in interviews nationwide attributed extensive cavities in part to lax
parenting, at all income levels.

“It’s not just about kids in poverty, though kids of lower socioeconomic
status tend to get more cavities,” said Dr. Rochelle Lindemeyer, director of
the pediatric dentistry residency program at Children’s Hospital of
Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania dental school. Affluent families may have nannies who “pacify kids by giving them a sippy cup all day,” Dr. Lindemeyer said.

Brushing teeth twice a day used to be nonnegotiable, she said, but not anymore. “Some parents say: ‘He doesn’t want his teeth brushed. We’ll wait until he’s more emotionally mature.’ It’s baffling,” she added.

Dr. Man Wai Ng, the dentist in chief at Children’s Hospital Boston, said she heard parents, rich and poor, make similar rationalizations about their preschoolers’ snacking, like, “I can’t ever imagine Johnny being hungry, so I’m laying out a whole-wheat spread that’s always available.”

With a grant from the DentaQuest Institute, Dr. Ng started a disease-management program to alter the habits of parents of children with cavities so some could avoid the operating room. Her advice includes less frequent snacks, and only four ounces of juice a day. She does not forbid sweets, but suggests brushing afterward, and bacteria-killing Xylitol lollipops.

Multiple studies have shown that even children who undergo general anesthesia to treat dental decay end up with cavities again. Janine Costantini, the ambulatory practice director at Children’s Hospital Colorado, said the staff treated a 3-year-old who was making his second visit to the operating room for dental work. The boy arrived with a bottle of Coca-Cola.
March 5, 2012

Fed Study of Student Debt Outlines a Growing Burden

By ANDREW MARTIN and RON LIEBER

A report released Monday by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York renews concerns about the growing debt load of college students and graduates.

The report suggests that as many as 27 percent of the 37 million borrowers have past-due balances of 30 days or more.

“In sum, student loan debt is not just a concern for the young,” the report said. “Parents and the federal government shoulder a substantial part of the postsecondary education bill.”

The report, which was created by an analysis of Equifax credit reports, said the total balance of student loans was $870 billion. Of the 241 million with Equifax credit reports (there are 311 million people in the United States), 15 percent had student debt.

Forty percent of the people under 30 had outstanding student loans, and the average outstanding debt is $23,300. About 10 percent of borrowers owe more than $54,000 and 3 percent owe more than $100,000.

Noting that that existing figures on student loans are spotty and largely anecdotal, the Fed said its analysis was an attempt to provide more accurate accounting of delinquency data.

The Federal Reserve came up with the delinquency figure by excluding from their calculation borrowers who were still students or those who were granted permission to postpone payments because of financial hardship, graduate school or some other approved reason. Those borrowers represent about 47 percent of all borrowers. Fed economists suggest that they should not be considered when measuring the delinquency rate because they aren’t making payments.

If they were included in the total, the percentage of borrowers who were 30 days late in making payments is 14 percent.

Lauren Asher, president of the Institute for College Access and Success, said the Fed study reinforced the need for borrowers to understand the distinction between federal loans and private loans and to know the available repayment options.
She noted that borrowers of federal loans were eligible for income-based repayment in which caps are placed on monthly payments to make them more affordable. In addition, she noted that borrowers of private student loans, which tend to have higher interest rates and fewer protections than federal loans, could now call the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to register complaints.

The Fed’s numbers are similar to those published in a report a year ago by the Institute for Higher Education Policy. That study, based on a sampling of borrowers, found that 26 percent of borrowers who entered repayment in 2005 became delinquent but did not default. Fifteen percent of borrowers not only became delinquent but defaulted on their loans.
Video game schools and students are in demand
By Mike Snider, USA TODAY
Updated 3d 20h ago March 2, 2012

The number of colleges offering degrees in video game design nearly doubled last year, further cementing games as a vibrant entertainment medium.

Yet the school most recommended for its video game design curricula remains the same: the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. USC has held the top spots each year in The Princeton Review's lists of top schools for video game design for undergrads and grad students.

More than 100 schools participated in the third-annual survey, up from 50 in 2010. "There certainly is an increase in visibility in game design, and schools are … putting out students that are employable," says David Soto, director of content development at The Princeton Review, known for its annual Best-Value Colleges list.

Game design students are in heavy demand. Employment in the video game industry grew at an annual rate of 8.6% from 2005 to 2009 with more than 120,000 employees, according to the Entertainment Software Association. The average starting salary for undergraduates has risen to $54,054 from $51,927 last year, ThePrinceton Review found. Grad students' annual starting salary rose to $62,862 from $59,539.
USC graduates have gone on to work at top publishers such as Activision and Electronic Arts and to work on blockbusters such as Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 and Rock Band 3. The school gets hundreds of applicants for 15 to 20 undergraduate slots and 15 graduate slots annually, says Tracy Fullerton, chair of the Interactive Media Division at USC's School of Cinematic Arts, which operates the joint games program with the School of Engineering. Annual tuition is $40,000 for undergraduates; $23,000-up for grad students.

New areas of emphasis include social and mobile games, motion capture and 3-D games, as well as gesture-based control such as Microsoft's Kinect. "Students need to be able to walk into industry five years from now, armed with the type of skills that today are just emerging," Fullerton says.

Other top undergraduate schools for game design include MIT, University of Utah and DigiPen Institute of Technology. Top graduate schools: Rochester Institute of Technology, MIT, University of Central Florida and Southern Methodist University. As students and parents evaluate schools, they should consider programs that foster learning through team-driven interdisciplinary cooperation, says Michael Zyda, director of the GamePipe Laboratory at USC.

"We have programmers, gameplay designers and artists, and they work to collaborate to build a piece of software that entertains and delights players," Zyda says.

Working in teams as large as 20 or more and producing products prepares students for the real world of game publishing, he says. "There is just no end to the demand for that type of person."