THE DAILY CLIPS

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ECU College of Business creates endowment with $100,000 donation from Edward Jones

The College of Business at East Carolina University announced the creation of a $100,000 endowment from St. Louis-based financial services firm Edward Jones. Earnings from the charitable gift will fund an annual outstanding student award, targeting individuals who have achieved academic excellence in the College of Business. Edward Jones offices from across the state pooled their personal resources for the endowment, designed to help students in the ECU College of Business.

“We strongly believe in giving back to the communities in which we do business,” a news release from financial advisers Steve Grant, Dave Hunt, Jonathan Powers and Greg Weighum said. “In addition to philanthropy at the national level, each Edward Jones financial adviser takes the firm’s commitment to community into his or her own area as well. As friends and alumni, we are excited to help students in our region and state.”

The first recipient of the Edward Jones Outstanding Student Award will be announced in this spring.

Just as Edward Jones is a client-centered company, the College of Business takes pride in being a student-centered school – focused on teaching tomorrow’s business leaders how to make a difference in their communities,” Frederick Niswander, dean of the College of Business, said. “We deeply appreciate the support from Edward Jones, which will help recognize and open many doors for our students.”

Edward Jones provides financial services for individual investors in the United States and, through its affiliates, in Canada and the United Kingdom. Every aspect of the firm’s business, from the types of investment options offered to the location of branch offices, is designed to cater to individual investors in the communities in which they live and work.

The firm’s 10,000-plus financial advisers work directly with more than seven million clients to understand their personal goals — from college savings to retirement — and create long-term investment strategies that emphasize a well-balanced portfolio and a buy-and-hold strategy.

The College of Business at ECU was founded in 1936 and has been accredited by the AACSB since 1967. The college has more than 3,100 undergraduate students, 870 graduate students, 135 faculty members, as well as 30 degrees, majors, and concentrations.
Allison named president of Pitt County Medical Society board of directors

Monday, March 16, 2009

Dr. Ron Allison, professor and chairman of the Department of Radiation Oncology at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, has been named president of the Pitt County Medical Society board of directors.

Allison is the director for the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center as well as chief of service for radiation oncology at Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Allison earned his undergraduate degree from Brooklyn College and received his medical degree and completed his residency training in radiation oncology at the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn.

Joining Allison on the board are Dr. Victoria Trapanotto of Eastern Radiologists as president-elect, Dr. Raetta Fountain of Atlantic Gastroenterology as secretary-treasurer and Dr. Elaine Cabinum-Foeller of the Brody School of Medicine’s Department of Pediatrics as past president.

The Pitt County Medical Society was chartered in 1903 and serves as the voice of the physician community. It is dedicated to maintaining the integrity of medicine, resolving local health care problems and promoting quality medical care to the community.

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Poet, activist Nikki Giovanni will speak at ECU

ECU News Services

World-renowned poet, writer, commentator, activist and educator Nikki Giovanni will speak March 27 at East Carolina University. The program will begin at 7 p.m. in Wright Auditorium and is part of the campus’ Ledonia Wright Cultural Center Day celebration. A reception will follow in the Bate Building.

One of the most widely read American poets, Giovanni prides herself on being “a Black American, a daughter, a mother, a professor of English.” Giovanni remains committed to the fight for civil rights and equality and has maintained a prominent place as a strong voice of the Black community. Her focus is on the individual, specifically on the power one has to make a difference in oneself, and thus, in the lives of others.

Born in Knoxville, Tenn., Giovanni grew up in Lincoln Heights, an all-black suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio. She and her sister spent their summers with their grandparents in Knoxville, and she graduated with honors from Fisk University, her grandfather’s alma mater, in 1968.

She published her first book of poetry, “Black Feeling Black Talk,” in 1968, and in the next year published a second book, launching her career as a writer. Early in her career, she was dubbed the “Princess of Black Poetry,” and after more than three decades of publishing and lecturing, has come to be called a “National Treasure” and, most recently, one of Oprah Winfrey’s 25 “Living Legends.”

A author of some 30 books for adults and children, Giovanni is a University Distinguished Professor at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va.

Tickets can be purchased through the ECU Central Ticket Office by calling 328-4788 or (800) ECUARTS or by visiting http://www.ecu.edu/ecuarts/cto. Admission is $5 for East Carolina University students, $8 for the general public, and $5 for children.

Show to feature music performances

Greenville cable viewers will have access to a new music performance television program featuring faculty and students from the School of Music at ECU.

“ECU School of Music Presents” is a 30- to 60-minute music performance and interview show airing on Sudanink Cable channel 99, also known as ECU-TV.

The first episode, featuring professor of guitar Elliott Frank, is scheduled to air Monday at 8 p.m. and will repeat at 10 p.m. The show will also repeat at the same times on Tuesday and Saturday.

New shows will be aired as they are recorded and will be rebroadcast at various times.

The show’s host is Christopher Buddo, director of the School of Music.

“The faculty at the ECU School of Music includes world-class performers — they truly appear in venues all over the world — and this program gives music aficionados in our region the opportunity to see and hear these gifted musicians play in the comfort of the viewer’s living room,” Buddo said. “And while it is impressive and fun to watch the student performances, it is important to remember that performance is part of the curriculum for many of these young men and women.”

Harley D’Art, assistant director at the School of Music and one of the show’s executive producers, said the format is designed for education as well as pleasure viewing.

“The various musical pieces are introduced and explained by the performers and faculty before each piece is performed, giving the audience unique insight into what they will hear,” D’Art said. “The taping format allows for multiple camera angles and very close shots of performers and instruments.”

The April show will feature Henry Doskey, pianist and chairman of the keyboard department, performing an all Chopin program. Future shows will include a variety of performances, including large ensemble vocal, percussion and steel drum, solo tuba and performances on historic instruments.

In addition to the broadcast, the music school will use the recorded programs for student recruitment and classroom education.
Aphasia support group planned

An aphasia support group for family members and people who have difficulty communicating because of stroke or brain injury is starting at ECU.

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders in the College of Allied Health Sciences is hosting the group the following Wednesdays: March 18, April 1, April 15, April 29, May 20, June 3, June 17, July 1, July 15 and July 29.

Meetings are free and will be held 5:30-6:30 p.m. in Room 4415 in the Health Sciences Building on West Fifth Street. Discussion on relevant topics, presentations and communication activities will be held. Refreshments will be served.

For more information, contact Sherri Winslow at 744-6142.

Ebenezer Baptist director to perform

Dr. Uzee Brown Jr., chairman of the Department of Music at Morehouse College, will be in concert and presenting lectures and workshops on African-American spirituals at ECU Tuesday through Thursday.

Brown is also director of the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church Choir. He is a respected educator and lecturer on African-American music, and for more than 30 years he has researched and worked to preserve Negro spirituals.

His visit to ECU is co-sponsored by the ECU Office of Co-Curricular Programs and the ECU School of Music, Special Events Committee.

On Tuesday, Brown will present in concert his own spiritual arrangements at 8 p.m. in the AJ Fletcher Music Building. The concert is free and open to the public.

Call 252-328-6851 for more information.

Alumni Road Race scheduled for April 18

The second annual Pirate Alumni Road Race and Fun Run to support ECU student scholarships will be held April 18.

The event is co-sponsored by the East Carolina Alumni Association, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina, Buffalo Wild Wings and Signs Now.

Open to the public, the 5K-road race and one-mile fun run will begin at 9 a.m. April 18. Entry fee is $15 until March 31 and $25 thereafter.

The road race, which is a USATF certified course #NC-04015-PH, begins at the Reade Circle parking lot of Chico’s Mexican Restaurant in Uptown Greenville, with the one-mile fun run to immediately follow. Race packets, including a free T-shirt, can be picked up at the starting point between 7:30 and 8:30 a.m. on race day.

Awards will be given to the first three male finishers overall, to the first three female finishers overall, and the top three male and female finishers in each of six age groups.

Register online at www.active.com, download a registration form at www.PirateAlumni.com/roadrace, or call the East Carolina Alumni Association at 328-6072 or (800) ECU-GRAD.
Awful numbers foretell Perdue's painful NC budget

By GARY D. ROBERTSON
The Associated Press

Sunday, March 15, 2009

RALEIGH, N.C. — North Carolina's dire financial picture became clearer before Gov. Beverly Perdue planned to unveil a budget proposal this week that apparently recommends eliminating programs and threatens state jobs.

With the unemployment rate now close to 10 percent, Perdue last week secured the state's rainy-day reserve fund, bringing to $1 billion the amount at her disposal to pay the state's bills this year.

Her budget office also suggested scenarios that call for cutting spending from $1.3 billion to $2 billion next year — from 10 percent to 15 percent at most agencies. Cuts for the public schools, higher education and health wouldn't be as deep.

Perdue's staff has repeatedly said these reductions are only placeholders, and there's federal stimulus money to ease the pain. But the new governor's references connecting this deep recession to the Great Depression during her statewide televised address has many worried about spending cuts unlike any time in recent state history.

"We are more nervous than we have ever been," said Debra Dihoff, executive director of the state chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a patient advocacy group. "It's really terribly scary."

It's starting to sink in with legislators, too.

When senators complained last week about State Health Plan changes that lobbyists for pharmacists said could result in job losses, the bill's sponsor suggested they file an amendment to appropriate $90 million to avoid them. There were no takers.

"The budget problems are of an unprecedented nature and will require cuts to the budget that we've never seen or experienced before," said the sponsor, Senate Majority Leader Tony Rand, D-Cumberland.

Perdue provided few details about the bad news in her spending plan for next year during last week's State of the State address.

"We are confronted with challenges our state has not seen since the Great Depression," she said. "With a $3 billion-plus shortfall, we have to be upfront and make hard, painful decisions."

The new governor scheduled a speech to talk about her education initiatives Monday, the day before she'll release her proposed two-year budget. General Assembly leaders ultimately will create the final spending plan this summer, with input from fellow Democrat Perdue.

She's pledged to increase per-pupil spending in the public schools, and that likely will be completed with the help of federal stimulus money.

But it won't mean state funding for K-12 education will be shielded. The budget scenarios from her office would reduce overall public school budgets from 4.5 percent to 7.5 percent.

Angella Dunston, director of the N.C. Justice Center's Education and Law Project, which advocates for students at risk of failure in the public schools, said she's representing families that also are at financial risk.

"People are literally losing their homes," she said. "Because you're (now) talking about our children or your child ... it's another level of anxiety that has been added to that plate."
Perdue's budget-writers say they've been trying to target poorly performing programs to find cost savings by eliminating them. But Perdue suggested her net is wider.

"We will reduce and cut state government programs and services that many, including me, know have been effective but which, in these times, we simply cannot afford," she told lawmakers.

That statement may give credence to the warnings of University of North Carolina system president Erskine Bowles. He told Board of Governors members in a memo that a 7 percent systemwide budget reduction would lead to eliminating 1,600 positions, almost 1,000 of which are currently filled.

That compares with the state's budget crisis earlier this decade, when lawmakers and then-Gov. Mike Easley agreed to reduce overall state government employment by about 1,200 positions over two years.

Perdue hasn't said if she will propose tax increases that Dunston and others say could avoid the worst cuts. But Republicans argue there are hundreds of millions of dollars in relatively easy savings to find or additional revenues without tax increases.

Many of the state government spending cuts to answer this year's $2.2 billion shortfall have been made through hiring freezes, limiting travel, reducing maintenance and delaying purchases.

"If it's done right, most people in the state of North Carolina will not notice that much in the way of cuts," said Senate Minority Leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham.

House Speaker Joe Hackney, D-Orange, disagreed with Berger, saying the Republican hasn't looked at the spending situation closely: "It's going to affect every citizen in North Carolina."

During the State of the State address, Perdue again recalled Gov. O. Max Gardner, who served from 1929-33, as a role model during uncertain economic times, someone who saw the opportunity to overhaul state government.

But when Perdue releases her budget Tuesday, she may feel more connected to Gardner's successor, John Ehringhaus. He cut the cost of state government by nearly one-third at the height of the Great Depression.
Bobby Burns: New ECU Web site offers digital window into region's past

By Bobby Burns
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, March 15, 2009

The folks at ECU’s Joyner Library reached a major milestone recently with the launch of an information-age window to eastern North Carolina’s past.

The new Digital Collections portal (http://digital.lib.ecu.edu) offers a one-stop shop for finding the library’s special collections online.

Historical items from the university archives, manuscripts, photographs, rare books and maps are featured along with other materials.

Researchers or the curious can visit the site to learn about the area’s heritage from primary documents covering architecture, the arts, black history, ECU history, health and medicine, social and family life, and much more.

Materials from across the holdings of the library were scanned, photographed or converted from audio and video into digital formats.

The Daily Reflector is proud to have a place in the collections. The paper years ago donated all the negatives shot by our photographers between ca. 1920 and 1967. The images are included in many of the 21 digital packages on the site so far, and they make up the entirety of "Seeds of Change: Evolution of Post-War Eastern North Carolina."

The library’s work to digitize the fragile frames offers a glimpse into the chore its staff has taken on. Each must be inserted into a computer scanner that reads it, a tedious process that can take several minutes. The scanner feeds information it gathers into software that converts it into images on a computer screen.

The digital file must be numbered, cross-referenced and loaded into collections where it might be relevant. Staffers must include with the image information they have gathered about who’s in the picture and the activity it depicts.

Now multiply that by the thousands of images that are in the Reflector collection, and multiply that by the thousands of other documents and media in the library’s stores, and you begin to see the task’s immense scope.

Prior to the Feb. 16 launch of this site, the only access to these items was in the library’s Special Collections Department Reading Room on Joyner’s fourth floor.

It’s a very cool place to hang out. You can leaf through the material in some cases, touch and feel stuff held by those who came before us. It offers a sensuous experience that can’t be duplicated online.

But the new Digital Collections portal offers the simplicity and practicality of the Web — anyone can find and use these items anytime and from any place.

The site offers simple or advanced searches. Users may browse through collections or use a subject cloud to discover items they may not have known the library owned.

And work is ongoing as library staff continues adding to the existing collections and adding new ones. Each record allows users to comment on or tag items, so they can add their own knowledge about the material.
Coming this month, the library will host a Founders Day program that features 20 alumni who made recordings in the Centennial Oral History collection on the site. These interviews relate the experiences of ECU alumni who were the first in their families to attend college.

The collection was created in honor of ECU's Centennial year and the March 26 program in the teaching resources center at 7 p.m. on Joyner's second floor will help cap off centennial celebrations.

You can listen to the interviews online now, but the program might be something worth leaving the virtual world to see.

Bobby Burns is associate editor, Internet news and information. Contact him at baburns@coxnc.com or (252) 328-8572. Click here to see our Pictures from the Past slide show.
**Tuned in**

**Laurels** — To the new radio system being used by Pitt County's key emergency response agencies, a long-needed upgrade that should improve service to citizens. The Greenville Police Department became the latest agency to change to the 800-megahertz digital radios last month, completing a slow effort to overhaul that system. It should make for better communication during emergencies.

**Going green**

**Laurels** — To the holiday for the Irish and those descended from the noble people of the Emerald Isle. St Patrick's Day may be commonly celebrated through the food and drink of Ireland, corned beef and cabbage and Guinness being popular favorites, but the day also intends to mark the perilous journey of an immigrant people who braved the Atlantic crossing for a fresh start in the New World. Bellow a hearty slainté to their memory.

**Darts** — To the precipitous decline in the value of East Carolina's endowment thanks to the falling stock market and an uncertain economy. Like universities across the country, ECU has seen its endowment plummet, dropping from $95 million to about $65 million. That threatens scholarships, professorships and other programs, harming the academic strength of the university.

**Darts** — To the latest unemployment figures that show North Carolina reaching a 25-year high, reaching a rate of 9.7 percent in January. That is more than double the 4.7 percent unemployment rate recorded a year earlier, and an increase of 1.6 percent over December's figures. Job losses continue to hurt families across the state, and create a heavy burden on state unemployment services.

**Laurels** — To the Atlantic Coast Conference men's basketball tournament, a tradition in North Carolina for 56 years. Though ECU fans may dislike the hype surrounding the ACC event due to the school's exclusion from conference expansion in 2004, the tournament remains a key date on the calendar for many in the state. Today's semifinals promise to be as exciting as ever, despite the venue.

**Laurels** — To the opening of Pitt Community College's new student center, which was dedicated this week. The building was funded through a 2000 bond referendum, but also through the generosity of Craig Goess, for whom the building was named. The new facility promises to be a tremendous resource for the PCC community.

*Compiled by Brian Colligan, editorial page editor of The Daily Reflector. Contact him at 329-9507 or via e-mail at bcolligan@coxnc.com*
Larry W. Shreve

Mr. Larry Weldon Shreve, 60, passed away Friday, March 6, 2009. A memorial service will be held Saturday at 3 p.m. in St. Timothy's Episcopal Church.

Larry grew up in Reidsville and moved to Farmville where he attended high school, graduating in 1967. A veteran of the United States Air Force, he served his country honorably for four years. He attended East Carolina University, where he received his Bachelors and Masters degrees in Fine Arts. Upon graduating, he ventured to New York and Ocean City, Md. for a couple of years before returning to Greenville in the late 1970's.

Larry began his teaching career at East Carolina University, Lenoir Community College and Pitt Community College. In 1990, he married Barbara Lewis and became the proud father of his daughter, Michelle. Larry also worked with his brothers in construction in addition to devoting his time to his lifelong hobby and passion, art.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Levi and Norma Shreve, and sister, Sheryl Hill.

He is survived by his daughter, Michelle Shreve; former wife, Barbara Lewis Shréé, both of Greenville; brothers, Durwood Shreve and wife, Diane, of Rocky Mount, and Rick Shreve and wife, Bonnie, of Reidsville; stepmother, Sarah Shreve; niece, Jennifer Shreve James; and nephew, Travis Shreve, all of Rocky Mount.

The family will receive friends immediately following the service at the Parish Hall.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to St. Timothy's Youth Program, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, 107 Louis Street, Greenville, NC 27858.

Pitt County must return $1.5 million to state due to 'glitch'

By Tom Marine
The Daily Reflector

Saturday, March 14, 2009

In addition to its $1.6 million deficit in county revenue, Pitt County must return another $1.5 million to the state because of payment errors involving its sales tax reimbursement during the past eight months.

The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners notified the county earlier this month about the problem with the sales tax distribution, according to the Pitt County Board of Commissioners agenda for its meeting at 6 p.m. Monday in the commissioners' auditorium of the county office building.

Several factors "blurred" the mistake, the agenda states, including economic conditions, sales tax allocation projects, the Medicaid swap and a lag in vendor reporting.

Pitt County is one of eight counties affected by the faulty sales tax distribution formula used by the North Carolina Department of Revenue since June 2008.

"It was an error on our part," Department spokeswoman Kim Brooks said. "It was a computer glitch. That's the best way I can describe it."

Due to the "glitch," Pitt County received duplicate payments for its sales tax reimbursement from April through November of last year, totaling more than $1.5 million in extra funds.

The agenda states Gov. Beverly Perdue's office has directed the payback to span eight months — the same amount of time which the error occurred — although the final amount could be altered by unknown distribution factors. Pitt County is yet to receive any official notice from the DOR, although the agenda says staff members expect to receive this information by the end of March.

"To ensure the county had the best possible financial outcome at year end, our department heads were made aware of this payback situation ... and together committed to limit spending as much as possible to help address this revenue gap," according to the agenda.

County Finance Director Melonie Bryan said the county will make small repayments to the state, setting April as the earliest month, but must factor them into the revenue projections for next fiscal year. She characterized the sales tax as erratic, saying February was one of the biggest sales months so far.

"There's no rhyme or reason for why last month's reimbursement was so much larger than the month before," Bryan said. "Our sales tax has not trended with the state. It will be painful to pay it back, but you account for it and do it."

At the board's agenda meeting on Thursday, County Manager Scott Elliott said if the departments can erase the revenue deficit with their 1 percent reversion, then Pitt County could use funds from the Medicaid swap to offset some of the duplicate monies.

The county pays a percentage of all Medicaid claims, but that burden will shift to the state starting in July. As a result, the county could be granted a credit of roughly $800,000 for this percentage drop, which could then be used to pay back the state.

The county commissioners will vote to accept this report at the meeting. Also scheduled for the board meeting:

Elliott will provide updates concerning Pitt County's attainment status, the proposed Candlewick Area
Sanitary District and the national economic stimulus package.

Related to the county's ozone status, the board will vote on a budget amendment to pay $16,400 in legal fees to Ward & Smith, the law firm hired to fight a non-attainment designation.

The county commissioners will rename and appoint members to the Pitt County Nursing Home/Adult Care Community Advisory Committee.

The board will hold a public hearing and authorize a resolution for a Pitt Area Transit's Community Transportation Program Grant.

Contact Tom Marine at tmarine@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9567.
Peanut allergy can be beaten

Tiny tastes shown to build tolerance

LAURAN NEERGAARD, The Associated Press

WASHINGTON - Scientists have the first evidence that life-threatening peanut allergies may be cured one day.

A few children are now allergy-free thanks to a scary treatment -- tiny amounts of the very food that endangered them.

Don't try this at home. Doctors monitored the youngsters closely in case they needed rescue, and there's no way to dice a peanut as small as the treatment doses required.

But over several years, the children's bodies learned to tolerate peanuts. Immune-system tests show no sign of remaining allergy in five youngsters, and others can withstand amounts that once would have left them wheezing or worse, scientists reported Sunday.

Are the five cured? Doctors at Duke University Medical Center and Arkansas Children's Hospital must track them for years to be sure.

"We're optimistic that they have lost their peanut allergy," said the lead researcher, Dr. Wesley Burks, Duke's allergy chief. "We've not seen this before medically. We'll have to see what happens to them."

More rigorous research is under way to confirm the pilot study, released Sunday at a meeting of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. If it pans out, the approach could mark a major advance for an allergy that afflicts 1.8 million people in the United States.

For the parents of the young allergy pioneers, the new treatment means they no longer fear
that something as simple as sharing a friend's cookie at school could bring a race to the emergency room.

"It's such a burden lifted off your shoulder to realize you don't have to worry about your child eating a peanut and ending up really sick," said Rhonda Cassada of Hillsborough. Her 7-year-old son, Ryan, has been labeled allergy-free for two years and counting.

It's a big change for a child who couldn't tolerate one-sixth of a peanut when he entered the study at age 2 1/2. By 5, Ryan could eat 15 peanuts at a time with no sign of a reaction.

Not that Ryan grew to like peanuts.

"They smell bad," he said matter-of-factly.

**1/1000th of a nut**

Millions of people have food allergies, and peanut allergy is considered the most dangerous, with life-threatening reactions possible from trace amounts. Although some children outgrow peanut allergy, that's rare among the severely affected.

Until now, avoiding peanuts entirely has been the only way to avoid a reaction. Allergy shots that help people allergic to pollen and other environmental triggers reduce or eliminate symptoms -- by getting used to small amounts of the allergen -- are too risky for food allergies.

Enter oral immunotherapy.

Twenty-nine severely allergic children spent a day in the hospital swallowing minuscule but slowly increasing doses of a specially prepared peanut flour, until they had a reaction. Each child went home with a daily dose just under that reactive amount, usually equivalent to one-thousandth of a peanut.

After eight months to 10 months of gradual dose increases, most can eat the peanut-flour equivalent of 15 peanuts daily, said Burks, who two years ago began reporting these signs of desensitization as long as children took their daily medicine.

**The body remembers**

Sunday's report chronicles the next big step.

Nine children who had taken daily therapy for 2 1/2 years were given a series of peanut challenges. Four in the initial study report -- and a fifth who finished testing last week -- could stop treatment and avoid peanuts for an entire month and still have no reaction the next time they ate 15 whole peanuts. Immune-system changes suggest they're truly allergy-free, Burks said.

Scientists call that tolerance -- meaning their immune systems didn't forget and go bad again -- and it's a first for food allergy treatment, said Dr. Marshall Plaut of the National Institutes of Health.

"Anything that would enable kids to eat peanuts would be a major advance," Plaut said, cautioning that more study is needed. "This paper, if it's correct, takes it to the next level. ... That is potentially very exciting."

Arkansas Children's Hospital has begun a study randomly assigning youngsters to eat either peanut flour or a dummy flour.

It's not over, but after the first year, the treated group ate the equivalent of 15 peanuts with no symptoms while the placebo group suffered symptoms to the equivalent of a single peanut, Burks said.
The treatment remains experimental, Burks stressed, although he hopes it will be ready for widespread use in a few years.

He isn't taking chances with the first five allergy-free kids. They're under orders to eat the equivalent of a tablespoon of peanut butter a day to keep their bodies used to the allergen.

Ryan Cassada says his mom sometimes hides the peanut-based items in other foods "so she can force me to eat it." Peanut butter cookies are OK, he says, just not straight peanut butter.

The battle is a small price, his mother said. "As much as I can get into him is fine with me. It's huge knowing he won't have a reaction."

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STAYING SAFE

Doctors say that it will be several years before the new food allergy treatment, called oral immunotherapy, will be ready for general use.

In the meantime, people with food allergies -- especially those who have experienced the most dangerous symptom, called an anaphylactic reaction -- must carefully avoid problem foods and be prepared for emergencies.

Some tips:
* Ask about ingredients when eating at restaurants or other people's homes. Make certain that cooks haven't simply plucked out the dangerous ingredient before serving.
* Read packaged food labels carefully.
* If you have ever experienced an anaphylactic reaction to a food, you may need to carry injectable epinephrine and antihistamines and make certain that you and those around you know how to use them.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ALLERGY, ASTHMA AND IMMUNOLOGY

BY THE NUMBERS

30,000: Emergency-room visits attributed to food allergies each year
200: Annual deaths from food allergies

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'Becoming a first choice'

By Matt Tessnear
March 13, 2009 - 11:59AM

When Mit McLean was a Craven Community College recruiter 20 years ago, people used to skip her information table in favor of university booths.

McLean said she now sees lines at the college's table at recruitment events, something she says is a sign that people view community colleges differently.

"Community colleges have always been an affordable option," said McLean, Craven's associate vice president for student affairs. "But now people are looking for that affordability. We used to be a second choice. Now, we're becoming a first choice."

Megan Richey said she first spent $30,000 a year at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Fla., before enrolling in the aviation program at Craven Community College. She said Craven's facilities and collaboration with Cherry Point make it the best place to study aviation.

"What we have is unique and one of a kind," Richey said. "Yeah, it (Embry-Riddle) is great, but it's expensive."

McLean said people pay $42 per semester hour at Craven Community College. For the same amount of time at East Carolina University, for example, she said people pay $197. She said people can now take many of the same classes at Craven that they would take at East Carolina or the University of North Carolina.

McLean and other career-planning officials say the Articulation Agreement between the state's 16 public universities and 58 community colleges makes that possible. The agreement allows community college students to take basic classes that will transfer directly to universities.

Sadina Phan, a student at New Bern High, said that agreement may decrease the number of years she has to go to school to train for a career in orthopedic medicine. Phan participates in a dual-enrollment program in which she gets high school and college credit for classes like English.

"If, for example, I make a D, I'll get that grade for high school and for college," she said. "So it's really important to do well. At first, dual was really convenient, and now it's really saving a lot of money."

Phan said she wishes she had known sooner that dual enrollment was an option. She began the program as a junior. After she graduates this year, she plans to take her two years of basic credits to East Carolina to complete a biology degree.
Megan Brame is now studying exercise science at the University of North Carolina. Brame, a 2005 West Craven High graduate, completed an associate’s degree at Craven Community College before transferring.

Brame worked 20- to 30-hour weeks in the college's academic skills center while she worked on her two-year degree. She said she earned enough money to pay for all of her tuition and fees.

"Financially, hands down, it's the way to go," she said. "If you manage time and work part time, you can pay for all of community college. It's like you're starting even when you're done."

Many students are thinking about education and career choices at an earlier age, and that may also affect community college enrollments, said Paula Hodge, the career development coordinator at New Bern High.

When Hodge took the position 13 years ago, 20 percent of New Bern High students who were surveyed said they planned to go to a community college. In a 2006-07 survey, 28 percent said they planned to go to a community college.

"We're seeing a trend," Hodge said. "That's because the kids can almost go to college free."

Hodge said some students graduate from high school with as many as 18 hours of college credit by completing dual-enrollment and other programs. Many students then take advantage of community college partnerships with businesses, such as BSH Home Appliances and Fleet Readiness Center East at Cherry Point, Hodge said.

Counselors are now visiting students at a younger age to talk to them about some of those opportunities, she said. Many elementary students even participate in Internet programs to explore careers. The College Foundation of North Carolina Web site offers PAWS in Jobland, a program in which a cartoon dog leads children through a quiz about things they like to do.

"It's something that really relates to them at that age," Hodge said. "Students then get into more advanced assessments in middle and high school."

Hodge said she tells high school parents that their children can get a well-paying job with a two-year degree from a community college, such as one in dental hygiene. She said a person with that degree can earn $45,000 right out of school. Scott Ralls, president of the state community system, said community colleges offer high quality for the low cost.

"It may be a lower-cost alternative, but it's not a lower-quality alternative," Ralls said. "Community colleges take a lot of pride in an open-door philosophy. We'll find a place for everybody. But that doesn't mean that what we offer is not of a high standard."
Community college affordability and growth

A few comparisons by the numbers

Affordability

$42 - Amount people pay per semester hour at Craven Community College

$197 - By comparison, the amount people pay at East Carolina University

Growth

7 percent - state system student increase in fall 2008

31 percent - state system student increase since 2001

11 percent - CCC student increase from spring 2008 to spring 2009

Plans

20 percent - the number of New Bern High students in 1996 who said they planned to attend a community college

28 percent - the number of NBHS students in 2006-07 who said they planned to attend a community college
Elementary pupils get an early look at colleges

CAPE CARTERET - White Oak Elementary School second-grader Maddle Maxwell walked along a row of college banners Friday in search of the one representing her teacher's school.

She donned a Duke University shirt with matching hair ribbon and expected to find Duke or another familiar North Carolina college logo on display. She hadn't heard of Gettysburg College or Cleveland State University, the schools attended by her and her brother's teachers.

"It made her think a minute but didn't change her loyalties.

"I'd be happy if I went to Duke. If I couldn't go there, maybe I'd go to East Carolina," Maddle said with a smile.

Then again, she says it's a bit early for her to think about college.

"I think about high school," she said.

The White Oak Elementary School media center held College Week in conjunction with the ACC Tournament, giving the students a fun glimpse at some of the colleges across the country and all the opportunities available to students if they work hard.

Teachers made banners for the schools they attended and brought their diploma to display.

"A lot of them already know Duke and Carolina and East Carolina because that's what they see, but there are so many," said Media Coordinator Jody Elliott. "This just gets them thinking about it."

ACC schools are well-represented at White Oak Elementary, as are North Carolina colleges stretching from the mountains to the coast.

The University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Mount Olive College and Campbell University are familiar locals. San Francisco State University, the University of Nebraska and Ohio State University could also be found among the mix of banners and diplomas.

"It has been interesting for us to see the colleges where the teachers are from," Elliott said. "We're from all over."

On Friday, the whole school joined in the fun with students and staff wearing a shirt from their college of choice.

Fourth-grader Dylan Mason was decked out in an East Carolina University sweatshirt and it was clear he's a fan of the Pirates and its athletics.

"The thing about ECU is it has a great baseball team and a great football team. If I could go, I'd like to play both," Dylan said.

For both, their fourth-grade year was a chance for exploration.