THE DAILY CLIPS

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Editorial: Public problem - Changing attitudes on domestic violence

Monday, April 06, 2009

North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper reported last month that domestic violence killed 131 people in the state last year. Days later, a heavily armed man walked into a Carthage nursing home and shot and killed eight people before a police officer shot him.

Authorities say they are looking into whether the killings are “domestic-related,” and it seems clear that they were. The man’s estranged wife, who works at the nursing home, has said she believes her husband killed seven residents and one staff member because he could not reach her inside the facility.

While that tragic event may not be related to the economic crisis, deepening financial troubles are causing a spike in domestic violence. Experts have long known that families under financial strain are more prone to violent behavior. A 2004 study by the National Institute of Justice found that in households experiencing job loss and other financial difficulties, the domestic violence rate was triple that of families without such troubles.

Statistics from agencies serving battered spouses bear out the results of that study. The National Domestic Violence Hotline reported an 18 percent increase in calls last October over the same month in the previous year. The jump is largely attributed to the worsening economy since the same measurement between October 2006 and 2007 actually shows a decrease in the number of calls.

Encouraging more victims of domestic violence to seek protective orders and other assistance, Attorney General Cooper said the problem is one that’s been “swept under the rug” over the years. Of the 131 people killed last year, Cooper says only eight had taken out protective orders and just three of those were current when the victims died.

The attorney general wants to create programs that would notify victims when their abuser is served with an order and require supervised probation for some offenders. The greatest challenge, he said, is eliminating the tendency for victims to treat abuse as a private issue.

If anything positive can come from the March 31 massacre at Pinelake Health and Rehab in Carthage, it may be that more victims of abuse, and others who witness the abuse, will adopt an attitude of treating domestic violence as a public problem.

“We owe it to those killed by domestic violence to look for ways to stop these crimes from happening,” Cooper said.

Now more than ever.
City officials celebrate life of Lessie Bass

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, April 05, 2009

Ward Street in west Greenville was closed to traffic Saturday while hundreds of residents joined Mayor Pat Dunn and other city officials to celebrate “Lessie L. Bass Day.”

Faculty from East Carolina University and Pitt Community College gathered at the Lucille Gorham Intergenerational Community Center as Dunn read a proclamation naming the day in honor of Bass, the ECU professor who served as the center’s executive director until her death on Jan. 18.

She had recently received the 2008 University of North Carolina Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Public Service.

“She was a woman of great vision; a positive person who believed in the goodness of humanity. That belief prevailed on the people of this community,” Dunn said. “The greatest honor that we can pay to her is to continue what she started here.”

The center, purchased and funded by the city as a vehicle for Bass’s vision of community revitalization, was one of many ways during her career that Bass applied her concept of combining ideals of self-empowerment within struggling communities with hands-on training for her social work students.

At the Gorham Center, residents could learn about personal financial management, access career development tools, get after-school tutoring and mentoring, and participate in personal development and recreational projects of their own choosing.

Councilwoman Rose Glover expressed a shared sensation of Bass’s vitality that remains in the community after her death.

“This center is a dream she had for a long time,” Glover said.

“She gave it her all and gave it her life. Her spirit will always be here and in the community. Everybody was special to her. That’s why there is so much community participation in today’s event. It’s a great day to honor her.”

While lunch was served at outdoor tables, D.D. Garrett, retired businessman and native of west Greenville, spoke about the value of Bass’s vision to the community.

“She was a blessing, a light to west Greenville,” Garrett said. “We have seen a vision that was not seen here prior to her arrival. Her spirit will live around here for a long time.”

He emphasized Bass’s legacy over her brief but important accomplishments.

“Dr. Bass made some changes, but what she really left us was a blueprint that will change the foundation of the community,” Garrett said. “She just did not live long enough to see her vision for this city happen. She left while she was in the middle of the process, and many of the young people she aimed at were not reached, but they will catch on to her vision.”

Bass’ belief in the need to bring all of herself to her work instilled a deep sense of personal connection to all who worked with her professionally and those who lived in the community and came for the services that the intergenerational center’s campus provided.

“This place belongs to the people of the community, and they take ownership of their issues here,” Dunn said.
"That's a very powerful phenomenon. The people here today are excited about what happens here, and she had a way to generate that kind of excitement."

Like the others, Dunn said her relationship with Bass was both professional and personal.

"Sometimes it's easy to get discouraged in one's work for a city," Dunn said. "I never came here to sit and talk with Lessie without leaving feeling encouraged and good about what goes on here and in the city.

"She knew what the challenges were, but she always saw light at the end of the tunnel, and there was never any doubt in her mind that what she and the city were doing here was right on target. That's a real gift. I'm going to miss her so much."

Deborah Moody, Bass's assistant, protege and close friend, now serving as interim managing director of the intergenerational center, unveiled a plaque bearing a photo of Bass receiving her Governors' Award from UNC System President Erskine Bowles, that will hang at the center.

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ECU Notes: Former U.S. Ambassador Joseph Wilson to speak

ECU News Services
Sunday, April 05, 2009

In 2003, White House officials leaked the identity of CIA agent Valerie Plame after her husband, former U.S. Ambassador Joseph Wilson, spoke out against the Bush administration.

The incident and its message for democracy will be the subject of a talk Wilson will deliver when he visits East Carolina University Tuesday. He will present his lecture, “Speaking Truth to Power,” at 2 p.m. in the Hendrix Auditorium at the Mendenhall Student Center. The event is free and open to the public.

The Bush administration asked Wilson in 2002 to investigate reports that Saddam Hussein was seeking to acquire uranium from the West African nation of Niger for Iraq’s nuclear program. Wilson reported back to Washington that there was no truth to the claims, yet President George W. Bush asserted in his 2003 State of the Union Address that “Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa,” identifying British intelligence as the source of this information.

Wilson’s presentation at ECU will focus on the First Amendment right and responsibility of citizenship. A question-and-answer session will follow.

The event is sponsored by the ECU College of Human Ecology’s Carolyn Freeze Baynes Memorial Lecture in Social Justice Series, Student Union Programming Board and Office of Institutional Diversity.

Brody honored for family medicine grads

The Brody School of Medicine at ECU is one of the top 10 medical schools in the country for sending graduates into family medicine, according to the American Academy of Family Physicians.

Representatives of the Brody School of Medicine and the other schools will be recognized May 1 at the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine meeting in Denver.

This is the third consecutive year ECU has been ranked in the top 10.

“This award is recognition of the Brody School of Medicine’s support and commitment for the training of family physicians,” said Dr. Kenneth Steinweg, interim chair of the Department of Family Medicine at Brody. “Family physicians are in huge demand throughout our region and state, and we are working hard to meet that need.”

ECU students win big in drafting competition

Thirteen East Carolina University students received national recognition for work performed in the fall 2008 semester. The students, who are pursuing a degree in the Design program through the Department of Technology Systems, were recognized in the 42nd Annual Design Drafting Contest conducted by the American Design Drafting Association (ADDA).

First place winners received the Board of Governors award; second place received the Board of Directors award; and third place earned the Presidential Award.

Winners in the residential architecture — computer aided division were Travis Roundtree (first), Tyler Priest (second) and Mathew Gardner (third).

Winners in the commercial architectural — computer aided division were Jeremy McKee (first), Christopher Denton (second) and Daniel Stiles (third).
Winners in the manual architectural rendering division were Joel Howard (first), Marcus Dill (second) and Brian Bell (third).

Winners in the GIS presentation division were: Jennifer Weigand (second) and Clay Suggs (third).

John Sweitzer won the Presidential Award in the computer-aided architectural rendering division. Edgar Santos won the Board of Governors award in the computer-aided structural division.

**ECU sponsors History Day competition**

The annual History Day competition sponsored by ECU’s Department of History will be held Wednesday in the Mendenhall Student Center.

Middle grade and senior high contestants from schools in N.C. Education District I will compete in groups and individually in eight contest categories, including exhibits, documentaries, dramatic performances, historic papers and web sites. The 2009 National History Day competition theme is “The Individual in History.”

This competition is held each spring on ECU’s campus. The Pitt County Historical Society provides plaques in recognition of winning schools in each of the categories.

**ECU partners with Aurora in new program**

ECU’s Office of Engagement, Innovation and Economic Development (OEIED) has partnered with the Town of Aurora to pilot a new Municipal Management and Innovation (MMI) initiative that leverages the resources and expertise of the university’s faculty, staff and students on behalf of small, low wealth, limited resource and limited capacity municipalities in eastern North Carolina.

“The Municipal Management Initiative is a tremendous asset to Aurora and is an exciting resource for small towns in eastern North Carolina,” said Aurora Town Clerk Sandra Sartin. “ECU is providing access to services and support that many small towns find difficult to access, and almost impossible to afford. We feel extremely fortunate to be a part of this initiative.”

The Town of Aurora is already engaged with OEIED on several fronts. The town has been provided a project management consultant to assist with general administrative management duties and to help coordinate community and economic development projects.

For more information, contact Kenny Flowers at 737-1342.

**Oratorical exhibition planned Monday**

The James Lester Rees Oratorical Exhibition, presented by the ECU School of Communication, will be held in Hendrix Theater Mendenhall at 7 p.m. Monday. Allan Hoffman of WNCT, who is also an adjunct instructor at ECU, will speak at the event. The theme for the exhibition is “How It Could Be.” For more information, contact Professor Pamela Hopkins at Hopkins@ecu.edu or call at 328-6717.

**More events**

See www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm for times, places and more information on ECU upcoming activities.
Riddle me this: ECU professor writes book on Victorian puzzles

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, April 05, 2009

Puzzles and riddles are part of everyday life.

Perhaps never in history was that more true than the 19th century in the United States and England.

East Carolina University English associate professor Gregg Hecimovich delves into word puzzles from Victorian England with his new book "Puzzling the Reader: Riddles in Nineteenth-Century British Literature."

With the rise of literacy among the middle class, parlor games and fun with words became an everyday activity that still exists today in the form of crossword puzzles, Hecimovich said.

But the puzzles of the Victorian era were not only found in periodicals but in books and poetry, if you knew how to spot them, Hecimovich said.

"There are puzzles and riddles in literature that we don't recognize that 19th century readers would," Hecimovich said. "Riddles are the first collected types of stories and this book serves as an introduction to the history of riddles and word games."

Part of his research included looking through periodicals and parlor game books of the 19th century at the British Library.

Queen Victoria herself even created a double acrostic, a kind of puzzle similar to a crossword.

The "Windsor Engima" is a famous example of a puzzle that challenges the reader and makes a statement about its contemporary times. The answer refers to coal, which fueled the industrial revolution and the expansion of the British Empire.

Hecimovich first got the bug for puzzles when he found a slip of paper in a first edition of Charles Dickens' "Our Mutual Friend" as an undergraduate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The slip, which for most editions is missing, is a riddle that is answered in the book.

It sparked a fascination in literary riddles and puzzles that lead to Hecimovich's dissertation and ultimately the publication of the book.

Hecimovich also points out the important role of riddles, especially in the interlocking courtship games, in his "Austen's Emma: A Reader's Guide," the other book he published in 2008.

In his reader's guide to "Emma," Hecimovich helps careful readers sort through the last book Austen published in her lifetime.

Since joining the faculty at ECU in 2002, Hecimovich has received the University of North Carolina Board of Governors Distinguished Professor for Teaching Award in 2006 and the ECU Scholar-Teacher Award in Humanities, the Max Ray Joyner Award for excellence in online education and the Bertie Fearing Award recognizing excellent teaching among English department faculty.

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Saturday, April 04, 2009

Laurels — To the impressive review bestowed on Greenville by Forbes magazine, which ranked the Emerald City the No. 2 “Small Place for Business and Careers” in the nation. Greenville landed behind Sioux Falls, S.D., and ahead of Morgantown, W.Va. The magazine ranked this community highly for its cost of doing business and job growth, but gave dismal marks for its crime rate.

Laurels — To the many charitable events taking place in the community this weekend. The East Carolina University Relay for Life began on Friday and finished this morning, raising money for the American Cancer Society. At 10 this morning, the Walk to Defeat ALS will increase awareness and funding to battle Lou Gehrig’s disease. And all weekend, the 12th annual Music for Miracles Radiothon will benefit the Children’s Miracle Network.

Laurels — To plans for the $6.8 million expansion of the Pitt-Greenville Airport announced this week that will improve a leading transportation asset for this community. The Federal Aviation Administration awarded the grant from the stimulus package approved by Congress earlier this year, and it will provide additional space in the terminal and a new look to the facility.

Darts — To the worst sign of spring in eastern North Carolina: the clouds of pollen from pine trees and other vegetation that give a yellowish-green tone to the landscape. Cars, sidewalks, buildings — everything is covered in the dust these days as nature breathes new life into local plants. Special sympathy goes to those with allergies who are enduring their annual suffering season.

Laurels — To a visit to Greenville by actress Beth Grant, an East Carolina graduate with more than 70 film credits to her name. She returned this week to speak with students hoping for a career on the stage or screen, offering advice from her three decades in the highly competitive industry. It was a rare treat for those with big dreams, and one seemingly enjoyed by the guest of honor.

Darts — To two events that forced evacuations and quick responses by emergency services workers Thursday. A chlorine leak near a Greenville Utilities water tower prompted officials to clear an area around a nearby shopping center, while sewer fumes forced the temporary closure of the new student center at Pitt Community College. Thankfully, there were no serious injuries in either episode.

Laurels — To the NCAA Final Four, where the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill still enjoys the chance to bring home a national championship. The Tar Heels play tonight against Villanova, with a spot in Monday’s championship on the line. Best of luck to them this weekend.

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

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Harry "Vann" Latham Jr.

Vann Latham, Mr. Harry "Vann" Latham Jr., 88, died on Thursday, April 2, 2009, having lived a long, well and productive life. He was a poet, author and a philosopher. Vann was born in Haslin (3.8 miles east of Belhaven) on Feb. 6, 1921, oldest of four children of Harry Vann Latham and Sarah Matilda Resseps Latham and grandson of Fred P. and Eva Latham and John B. and Alice Latham Resseps. Vann graduated from John A. Wilkinson High School in 1938, N.C. State College with a B.S. degree in Mechanical engineering in 1942, and from East Carolina University with a Master's degree in Psychology in 1968. Vann and Hester Mae Rose were married on Dec. 7, 1946 (Pearl Harbor Day). Hester preceded him in death, February 2004. They had two children, Val (Harry Vann Latham III) who preceded him in death in December 1995 and Cynthia and her husband, Steve Wilson, who survives and lives in Greenville. Vann entered military service in the summer of 1942 and was assigned to the U.S. Army Air Corps, with initial duty at Sioux City, Iowa. After a few months in the states, he was shipped to Hawaii with the 372 Bomb Squadron, assigned duty as an engineer officer, responsible for ground support for B-24 aircraft. After a short stay in Hawaii, the squadron, now a part of the 207th Bomb Group, shipped to the South Pacific at New Hebrides in the Vanuatu Islands. After serving with the group at the Vanuatu Island bases in the theater, Vann was discharged in the spring of 1946 with rank of Major. He returned to Belhaven after the service and joined with father Harry and brother Charles in a family farm supply and equipment business. He later established and operated a ready mixed concrete business that supplied materials in Belhaven and in other eastern N.C. locations. When this operation was terminated, he returned to manage the family enterprise after Harry passed away in 1961. Vann attended ECU and then stayed to teach math at John A. Wilkinson High School from 1963 to 1967. Then, the family moved to Greenville where Van attended graduate school and joined the faculty at ECU, teaching math and psychology. In 1974, he joined the math faculty at E.B. Aycock Junior High School and retired from there in 1986. Since then, he was involved in various activities such as writing a book, writing poetry and mentoring others. He passed on appreciating the opportunity given to associate with Hester Mae, Val and Cyndy and all who provided a profound element to his life. Vann is survived by his daughter, Cynthia "Cyndy" Wilson and her husband, Steve, of Greenville; a brother, Charles F. Latham and his wife, Ann, of Belhaven and a sister, Ann Latham of Washington Park. In addition to his parents, his wife and his son, Vann was preceded in death by a sister, Jane Latham Dilday. A memorial service will be held 1:30 p.m. Sunday at the Chapel of Paul Funeral Home in Belhaven. Entombment will follow in Belhaven Community Cemetery Mausoleum. Following the entombment, the family will receive friends at the First Christian Church in Belhaven. A celebration of Vann Latham's life will be held at the home of Dr. and Mrs. William Cox, 102 Long Meadow Road, Brookgreen, Greenville at 6:30 p.m. Sunday. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the "Val Latham Memorial Fund" for perpetual flowers for the chapel at Pungo District Hospital, c/o Paul Funeral Home, P.O. Box 6, Belhaven, N.C. 27810. You may sign Mr. Latham's guestbook by visiting www.paulfuneralhome.com. Paul Funeral Home of Belhaven is serving the Latham family.

Published in The Daily Reflector on 4/4/2009
Ruth G. Shaw

Ruth G. Shaw, 81, of Carolina House of Greenville died Thursday, April 2, 2009. A memorial service will be held Monday at 2 p.m. at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. Ruth, a native of Chester, Pa., was the daughter of the late J. Homer and Verna Blanch Graber. The Graber family spent several summers at Pushaw Lake in Maine. While teaching in the School of Music at East Carolina University, she met her best friend, Jan Lovette Kittrell. A talented musician, Ruth enjoyed playing the piano and singing. She also enjoyed watching and listening to ECU and Penn State Football, and figure skating. She was a member of Sweet Adelines, and St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, where she sang in the choir. She was a loving and supportive mother. She is survived by her son, John Duncan Shaw, of Winterville; nephews, James David Stratton, and Peter Glenn Stratton; niece, Dian Ruth Stratton, all of Maine; She is also survived by her surrogate family, William Kittrell, of Crozet, Virginia and Jim and Heidi Kittrell, of Greenville; and surrogate grandchildren, Jack, David, Jim, and Maggie Rose. The family will receive friends in the Parish Hall immediately following the service. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, 401 E. 4th St., Greenville, NC 27834 or to Pitt County Autism Society, 3491 E. South Evans St. Greenville, NC 27835. Online condolences at www.wilkersonfuneralhome.com.

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Lou Holtz talks coaching at clinic

By Tony Castleberry
The Daily Reflector

Friday, April 03, 2009

Skip Holtz’s decision to become a college football coach wasn’t exactly the path his parents might have chosen for him.

In fact, Holtz’s father, Lou, said Skip could have faced physical harm at the hands of Skip’s mother, Beth, based on his decision.

“He came to me and said he wanted to be a coach while we were at Notre Dame,” Lou said prior to speaking to a room full of football coaches at a clinic at East Carolina’s Harvey Hall Friday evening. “I said, ‘I didn’t send you to Notre Dame to be a coach. I could have sent you to Kent State. I sent you to Notre Dame to be a president of a corporation.’”

“He said, ‘Well, I want to be a coach.’ I said, ‘Have you told your mom?’ He said, ‘No.’ I said, ‘Make sure she’s unarmed because she’ll shoot you.’”

Lou is known as the outspoken, energetic ESPN analyst to many young football players and fans, but it doesn’t take much searching to discover that his impact on the game is much broader than any TV appearances. He was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame last May and posted a 249-132-7 record during an illustrious coaching career that began in 1969 and ended in 2004.

Leading Notre Dame to a perfect 12-0 season and the NCAA championship in 1988 may be Lou’s greatest professional achievement, but he’s very proud of what Skip, who’s entering his fifth season as head coach at East Carolina, has accomplished.

Even if mom wasn’t elated with Skip’s decision to follow in dad’s footsteps.

“He chose it for the right reasons,” Lou said. “We’re very proud and I’m now the second-best coach in the family.”

As for his decision to enter the world of television, Lou seems to think he’s beaten the odds to make it to ESPN.

“You look at me, 5-foot-10, 152 pounds, I have a lisp,” he said. “I have a physique. It appears like I’ve been afflicted with scurvy. I was in the lower half of my high school class. I mean, I have no ingredients for TV, but everybody needs something to do.”

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Officials hope focus on chronic disease will reduce health care costs

By Tom Marine
The Daily Reflector

Friday, April 03, 2009

North Carolina will not be able to control the soaring cost of health care until it addresses chronic diseases that burden the economy, Gov. Beverly Perdue said Friday at the East Carolina Heart Institute.

To combat these growing health problems, Perdue announced North Carolina will join the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease, a multi-state coalition of providers, community organizations and health policy experts. The partnership seeks to educate the public about chronic disease, mobilize Americans to call for change in how the country approaches chronic disease and challenge policy makers for better decisions, according to the PFCD Web site.

"Let me be plain, there are no easy solutions," Perdue said. "The problem is here and the solution is here. The only thing that will change this is if we change our behavior."

Perdue said the partnership is more than words, meaning it provides a strategy to confront obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases. She said the it focuses on single solutions, which are client-based, with the ultimate goal of reducing health care cost.

North Carolina joins 11 other states in the PFCD, including Colorado, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

"I don't like the data," Perdue said, referring to the health statistics showing eastern North Carolina is one of the unhealthiest regions in the country. "My plan for North Carolina and your plan for North Carolina is to go to work today. It will be a tough fight with no easy solutions."

Paul R.G. Cunningham, dean of the Brody School of Medicine, said many worsening health problems are treatable and preventable. Still, he noted, there are some troublesome statistics which must be addressed, such as premature mortality rates, cancer deaths among minority populations and the prevalence of Human Immunodeficiency Virus, also known as HIV.

"I believe there is a strong role for this partnership," Cunningham said. "This mission is in line with that of the Brody School."

Cunningham will serve as co-chair of the North Carolina PFCD with Thea Monet, executive director of the Old North State Medial Society. Speaking to more than 100 attending medical experts and elected officials, Monet told her own family's story of battling chronic disease.

"These people may have heard your presentation," Monet said to the governor, "but you were talking to me."

Monet said community health is about both lifestyle choices and educating people. She said the PFCD will reach out — to poor and maligned populations — and tell them there are options for health and wellness.

W. Randolph Chitwood Jr., director of the East Carolina Heart Institute and senior associate vice chancellor for health sciences at ECU, said the 29 counties in eastern North Carolina served by the institute suffer from the highest mortality rates of chronic diseases. He said that presents a mandate to reduce the impact of stroke, diabetes and other prevalent health problems.

"Three years ago, Gov. Perdue was here, shovel in hand, to start building this heart institute," Chitwood said. "I saw then she was the ideal leader for fighting chronic diseases."

Perdue said 75 cents of every health care dollar is spent on chronic diseases, yet most deaths still result
from them. She described the financial burden as "inexcusable."

As one possible solution, Perdue said North Carolina is going to start charging state employees more for their health plans, if they choose to live unhealthy. Perdue said there would be surcharges for smoking or obesity.

"The future is determined by the present," she said. "What you put in your mouth and do with your body has an impact at the end of the day."

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CyberKnife officially unveiled during ribbon cutting

The Daily Reflector

Friday, April 03, 2009

The Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University on Friday officially unveiled its newest tool to fight cancer — the CyberKnife Robotic Radiosurgery System.

The medical school's Department of Radiation Oncology held the open house and ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center. The CyberKnife specializes in targeting accuracy, allowing it to deliver radiation treatments with minimal damage to surrounding body tissue.

"The CyberKnife is critical for several reasons," said Dr. Ron Allison, professor and chairman of radiation oncology at the medical school and director of the cancer center. "First, in a rural population many patients are so far from a radiation oncology clinic that they won't get treatment. They can't make the 10 to 45 visits required due to distance, gas costs and being away from home.

"For most of these patients, the CyberKnife is able to treat in one to five visits."

The project costs to acquire the device and renovate the clinical space totaled $5.2 million. The center began operating the CyberKnife in February.

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Students devise low-cost TB test

Invention would help poor nations

BY KRISTIN COLLINS, Staff writer

RALEIGH - Many students have idealistic notions about making the world a better place. But three N.C. State University seniors have a plan.

They have invented a small device that can diagnose tuberculosis in seconds, at a cost of less than a dollar -- an invention that, if successful, could help eradicate an epidemic that infects millions of people every year in poor countries.
It started as a senior project in the university's engineering entrepreneurship program. It has turned into a business plan, with real potential for saving lives in countries such as India, China and South Africa.

"It has transcended school," said Hersh Tapadia, 22, an electrical engineering major from Raleigh.

Tapadia and biomedical engineering students Daniel Jeck and Pavak Shah spend 25 or 30 hours a week huddled in a small office on Centennial Campus, refining a device that looks like little more than a miniature microscope connected to a computer.

It allows even an untrained person to diagnose TB by sliding in a stained slide smeared with a patient's sputum. If the person is infected, TB bacteria glow bright white on a black screen. If the patient is not infected, the screen remains black.

It's a simple concept. But many people, including the three students' professors and mentors from around the country, say the device has big potential. With more refinements, it could also be used to diagnose malaria and HIV, the other major scourges of the developing world.

Naman Shah, Pavak's brother and a medical student at UNC-Chapel Hill, said they are treading on new ground in an area that many major medical research firms and drug companies ignore.

"This isn't the next huge thing that's going to make a company billions of dollars," said Naman Shah, 24, who has worked in infectious disease clinics in India. "But there are a lot of people who need it."

According to the World Health Organization, nearly 14 million people have active, infectious TB. In 2007, more than 9 million people developed the disease and 1.75 million died from it. The vast majority of cases are in poor countries in Asia and Africa.

The problem is not a lack of treatment. Cheap or even free TB drugs, funded by governments and grants, are available in much of the world. If the disease is caught early, many patients can go on to live healthy lives.

Results take too long

But in poor countries, TB is often not caught until it is advanced and highly contagious. A diagnosis requires a trained scientist who can recognize TB cells under a microscope.

If a health clinic lacks a trained technician, it can take months to send samples to labs and get results. By then, patients may have died or infected others.

International health officials estimate that about 40 percent of TB cases are missed using that method of diagnosis. For years, public health officials have sought better diagnostic tools in poor countries.

Pavak Shah said many researchers ignore the need for simple, low-cost tools as they focus on building better, faster and more complex medical devices. He said he wanted instead to create a tool that could be used easily by an untrained person, without benefit of a fancy laboratory.

"Clean labs that are temperature-controlled, that's something we take for granted here," said Shah, 20. "In the places we're talking about, air conditioning does not exist."

To market they go

The three students have become so passionate about their invention that they hope to turn it into a business and get it to market rather than leaving it to languish on a shelf at NCSU, as the vast majority of senior projects do after grades are given.
If their venture, called MedCount, is successful, it could be a first for NCSU's Entrepreneurship Initiative. Tom Miller, head of the initiative, said he doesn't know of any project created by undergraduates that has been taken to market. But he said this one has that potential.

While many students spend their time building gadgets that charge cell phones or enhance video games, these students are absorbed in global issues far removed from their privileged upbringings. Tapadia and Shah are the sons of immigrants from India, and all three were raised in the Triangle.

They spend school breaks searching for mentors and meeting with potential customers. Pavak Shah traveled to Boston to seek the counsel of a respected Harvard researcher, who has since become a supporter of their research. And Tapadia, while attending a family wedding in India, made a side trip to talk to workers in TB labs that might use the device.

'Form the question'

They say the project has taught them that it is possible to solve many of the world's major problems. It just takes the right mindset.

"Once you form the question, it's surprising how easy it is to find the answer," Jeck said.

Stephen Walsh, head of NCSU's Engineering Entrepreneurs Program, said these three students have absorbed the basic message the university is trying to instill.

"You can go out there and go after your meaning," Walsh said. "We want them to figure out, how do you make meaning with your life while making a living?"

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Top Drawer

BY JOYCE CLARK HICKS, Staff Writer
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Green travel tips

Take in the state's natural beauty with these green tips from the Center for Sustainable Tourism at East Carolina University and the N.C. Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development:

1. When exploring the state's natural wonders, stay on designated trails and roads. This prevents erosion and keeps sensitive plants and ecosystems from being trampled.

2. When traveling by car, save gas, reduce air pollution and protect wildlife by respecting designated speed limits.

3. When traveling with pets, keep them on a leash and under your control to help protect other visitors and wildlife. Bring a plastic bag to pick up pet waste and help keep streams and creeks cleaner.

4. Support local artists and craftsmen by buying locally made handicrafts and products. This helps preserve North Carolina's rich cultural heritage and sustain the next generation of local artists.

5. Supporting local agriculture is one of the best ways to enjoy the rich flavors of North Carolina. It also reduces the distance food has to travel and supports local farmers.

6. When visiting historic downtowns, put your trash in waste bins. Many towns and businesses offer recycling for visitors, so if you can't find a recycling bin, ask for one.

7. There is a lot of North Carolina that can be seen with nonmotorized transportation only. Try it. This helps reduce air and noise pollution.

8. Reduce impact on historic sites and artifacts by following posted signs and not touching or removing objects.

9. To help reduce noise and impact, travel in small groups and be respectful of other visitors.

10. Help protect the state's wide range of wildlife by viewing from a distance, not feeding wild animals and never following or harassing wildlife.

Good Housekeeping Seal goes green

Good Housekeeping magazine is celebrating the 100th birthday of its Good Housekeeping Seal of quality assurance by introducing a new stamp of approval. The Green Good Housekeeping Seal is an environmental extension of the original seal. The green seal will evaluate products based on environmental impact, and it will give consumers guidance in making eco-friendly purchases and choices. The green seal will go only to products that meet standards on water quality, packaging reduction and energy efficiency. The magazine will reveal the first products that have earned the Green Good Housekeeping Seal later this year.
Eco-friendly video contest

Garner resident Joe Peck has produced a three-minute eco-friendly video he hopes will pay off with a different kind of green in the coming month. Peck submitted a video called "The Green Bike" to JustDoOne.org, an online community committed to fostering environmentally friendly ideas.

Participants were encouraged to submit ideas for sustainable living via short YouTube-style videos. The videos could then be viewed for free. If Peck's video wins, he will win $5,000. The contest closed March 1, and winners are to be announced Wednesday. You can view his video at www.youtube.com/profile?user=justdoonecontest. Select "see all," click on the third page and scroll to "The Green Bike."

Show your pride

Environmentalists, businesses, homeowners, schools and others committed to green living can show their true colors by displaying the Green Pride flag. The flag features six green-hued horizontal bars that its creator says represent the multiple ways people and organizations can get involved in protecting the Earth. It was created by Mike Aaron, founder of greensender.com, an eco-friendly consumer goods and gifts business. The flag sells for $25 plus shipping and is available at www.greensender.com or by calling 973-821-4213.

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I agree with the USA TODAY editorial that criticized colleges and universities for failing to rein in pay and tuition costs ("Colleges duck tough cuts, keep hiking pay and tuition," Our view, Cost of education debate, Monday).

Colleges and universities need to figure out how to achieve the productivity gains that we expect from other businesses. Changes in teaching loads could help, but so could changes in teaching methodologies. I am a former professor and administrator of three major public universities (I was interim president of one).

College professors teach about the same number of students per day today as they did 20 years ago. Some even teach fewer students, so they can have more time for intellectual pursuits. For the most part, colleges and universities are resistant to productivity gains, other than larger classes in auditoriums. Very few have adopted new approaches that reduce costs per student.

The opposing view by Gary Rhoades, general secretary of the American Association of University Professors ("Cuts hurt education quality"), is defensive and fails to identify productivity as the real issue. Our public institutions still expect state legislatures to cover a significant share of their budgets, though their instructional expenses continue to outpace inflationary adjustments. And students are asked to shoulder the rest of the burden, with outrageous tuition increases.

General Motors has not made the productivity gains needed to keep it viable; neither have our institutions of higher education.

Richard J. Sauer
Blue Springs, Mo.

Professors earn our pay

I am one of those professors who is blamed for contributing to rising college costs. The false impression is that we do too little and earn too much. Although I am in the classroom only seven hours per week this semester, teaching is only 10% of what I do.

I publish only one to two papers each year, but each usually represents three or four years of data collection. I also have a responsibility through the Cooperative Extension System to work with farmers throughout my state, and this requires considerable travel.

I spend hours each week answering questions from the public in my area of expertise, at no charge. Advising students, preparing for class, grading papers, writing grants, updating websites, writing reports, preparing presentations, acquiring supplies, and managing staff and a laboratory take considerable time.

I, along with most of my colleagues, work 50 to 60 hours per week and rarely take vacations.

Most of my colleagues are extremely dedicated to their work and do far more than is recognized. There are other factors driving up costs. One is the desire to have better facilities in order to be more competitive for grants and for students.

In addition, colleges must hire more administrative and support personnel to conform to ever-increasing regulatory demands.

Professors' salaries have not increased much more than the average household income over the past decade, and identifying them as the driver of high college costs earns a failing grade.

Marvin Pritts, professor
Department of Horticulture
Cornell University
Ithaca, N.Y.

Taking colleges to task

It's about time a major U.S. news publication took universities to task for using tuition to rip off students for the past 30 years. As USA TODAY's editorial indicated, too many universities and colleges, in the middle of an economic crisis, continue to run their operations with a business-as-usual approach.

Tuition has risen well beyond inflation rates, with many rates as high as $40,000 a year. It's not uncommon to see tuition rates rise more than 10% in one year. Those are obscene costs and a burden to the consumer.

More disturbing, as tuition and book costs continue to rise, full-time professors actually spend less time in the classroom. USA TODAY correctly points out that many professors spend fewer than 10 hours a week in the classroom.

Yet, they continue to get significant pay increases. The example cited in the editorial of the University of Massachusetts planning to raise tuition and fees by a whopping 15% while raising faculty salaries is almost beyond belief.

I would urge USA TODAY to keep pursuing this issue. We have been ripped off by these academic thieves for much too long. It's about time someone took them to task.

Jerry Komar
Collingswood, N.J.

Invest in higher ed

USA TODAY's editorial paints a severely distorted picture of the realities public colleges and universities are confronting in these harsh economic times.

Severe state funding cuts are profoundly affecting public schools nationwide. Nevada Gov. Jim Gibbons proposed a 36% cut for higher education. In Washington, Gov. Christine Gregoire proposed a 13% cut for the state university system.

In New York, where the editorial notes there will be a tuition hike of 14% at the state universities, Gov. David Paterson and the legislature decreed that 80% of tuition will be diverted to help pay for the state deficit, and only 20% will go to SUNY.

Rather than equipping labs and hiring faculty, institutions must use increased revenue primarily to meet inflation and offset the losses in state appropriations.

Tuition increases might not be popular, but they are necessary — not so that public colleges and universities can increase salaries, but so that they can make ends meet. Funding cuts are exactly the wrong approach.

Public investment in higher education, especially in recessionary times, is good economic policy.

Shirley Strum Kenny, president
Stony Brook University
Long Island, N.Y.