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Chamber’s 100-day program challenges participants to ‘live healthy’

By Tom Marine
The Daily Reflector

Monday, April 27, 2009

After 100 days of sweat and sacrifice, the Greenville population is more than 2,500 pounds lighter and about 19,000 hours more active.

Monday marked the end of the Live Healthy Greenville challenge, which asked participants to log their physical activity hours and the number of pounds lost each week on the program’s Web site. Nearly 700 local residents — forming 118 teams — competed in the three month challenge, hosted by the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce.

“We came into this program to make our business community more health conscious,” said Scott Senatore, vice president of marketing and technology for the chamber. “We didn’t have any numbers in mind, but we have some pretty amazing health stories.”

Ann Barnhill, of the law firm Mattox, Davis, Barnhill & Edwards, held up a picture of herself from one year ago. Seventy-four pounds later, Barnhill is working out seven days a week and has made the conscious lifestyle change for better health.

“This (program) helped keep me on track and gave me the incentive to stay on my diet,” she said. “I think the most important thing is the exercise and making it a daily priority in your life. For me, that was the biggest change.”

Barnhill said five of her co-workers and two friends competed together in the challenge, which added a level of accountability to keep them motivated. She said none of her team, including herself, have reached their final goal.

“I had to get my mindset right, so I will follow through on it,” Barnhill said before she left to go to the gym.

Senatore said one participant, who suffers from type 2 diabetes, was able to stop taking his diabetic medicine by regulating his blood sugar with diet and exercise.

Brent Anderson, vice president of public relations for Evolve Inc., lost 40 pounds during the challenge. He said the competition of the program forced him to exercise more and eat healthier by eliminating soft drinks from his diet and having five small meals per day.

“I’ve still been on the treadmill early in the morning,” Anderson said. “You have it all there. You need to work for it.”

Anderson’s team at Evolve won the award for greatest weight loss, totaling a roughly 11 percent total weight loss. The East Carolina University “Lodge Lizards” won the award for most activity hours, with nearly 532 hours.

The teams received medals and baskets from The Fresh Market.

Troy Vincent, from Live Healthy America, said if Greenville can experience this level of success with a pilot program, imagine what its population can do next year.

“It’s amazing what a small group of people can do,” he said. “Health and wellness can be a hard thing to do sometimes. We need more people shouting the words, ‘We need better health.’”
Vincent even predicted a challenge between Greenville and Raleigh for the 2010 program.

"You can do it," Vincent told participants. "You can be an ambassador to a family member, friend or your community."

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Leaders seek inspiration in New Bern's historic district

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, April 28, 2009

Greenville officials are looking to other towns for inspiration as efforts continue to revitalize the downtown business district.

The mayor, city manager, council members and redevelopment commission members were among those invited to explore New Bern's historic district Thursday. Uptown Greenville — a nonprofit advocating for growth and improvement downtown — organized the day trip, which was originally planned as its board's annual retreat. But Director Denise Walsh said part of what made New Bern redevelopment successful was collaboration between the chamber, the city and their nonprofit entity, Swiss Bear.

"We wanted to see how communities like Greenville can make changes for the positive," she said. "They've created a really safe environment where people want to live and have their business.

"It's encouraging to go to a community ... where they talk about piles of tires once lining their waterfront. They were thinking they'd never be a tourist destination. To see that transition."

Walsh stressed there are many differences between Greenville and New Bern — their strengths being Tryon Palace and historical attractions while here they're East Carolina University and the healthcare industry. Still, she said there are applicable experiences to learn from.

City Planner Carl Rees said he was impressed by the city's sustained commitment to redevelopment.

"New Bern is into their third decade and we're just into our first," he noted. "They have stayed committed and stayed energized for 25 years. And they've always been doing something — through good times and not-so-good times. They had a plan and they stuck to it."

Current plans in Greenville are to better utilize the Town Common, create a plaza space at the intersection of Fifth and Evans streets and hold more events such as the upcoming Umbrella Market. The city purchased a theater property last year that officials hope to renovate and Emerge Gallery and Art Center is now the Pitt County Arts Council.

Walsh believes part of the battle is changing perceptions of downtown and reminding people what's unique about the area. She'd also like to see more spaces renovated into living quarters.

"We want it to be a place for everyone in our community," she said. "To create the heart of Greenville."

Mayor Pat Dunn pointed out there are already a good number of reasons to venture downtown: Sheppard Memorial Library, the Humber House, city and county government offices, ECU and local restaurants. She, too, was struck by New Bern's persistence and commitment.

"I've been told when people are looking for places to locate business and industry they look at our downtown area," Dunn said. "(Revitalization) is not happening as fast as we'd like, but as long as things are happening ... that's positive."

The Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce is taking a group to tour Charlottesville, Va., Thursday and Friday. They'll explore revitalized neighborhoods and housing, an environmentally friendly visitor's center and other areas of the city.

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9566.
ECU students can donate unwanted possessions

Monday, April 27, 2009

Departing college students no longer have to leave their unwanted possessions in giant piles around town. They can be donated easily to local charities.

The Pirates Treasure program, organized by the city of Greenville and East Carolina University, encourages students to drop off unwanted items at ECU that will later be distributed to needy families in the area by local social services groups.

The Pirates Treasure program, which started in December of 2008, aims to curb the amount of waste left in campus neighborhoods or sent to landfills by departing ECU students.

Students can drop off their unwanted household goods, including furniture, kitchen appliances, clothing, nonperishable foods, lamps and more, at the Willis Building on the corner of First and Reade streets today and Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Donations will be accepted by Pitt County Habitat for Humanity and Meals on Wheels.
Two questioned in dorm assault, third sought

Monday, April 27, 2009

East Carolina University police have interviewed two suspects and are looking for a third in a reported sexual assault that took place in Clement Hall last month.

Assistant Police Chief Dawn Tevepaugh said tips called in after images of the suspects were released last week led the department to identify three individuals. She said two suspects have been interviewed and charges will be filed once the third has been located and questioned.

The men's names have not been released and no one has been taken into police custody at this time.

The suspects are believed to be between 17-19 years old. None live in Pitt County, Tevepaugh said. At least two tips named the same group of suspects.

An 18-year-old student reported March 28 that three men had stolen a laptop, a desktop computer, a printer, a calculator, an Adidas bag and a North Face bag from her room.

After further investigation, it was reported a sexual assault took place while the suspects were in the room.

The images released by ECU police last week were captured by campus security cameras on March 28 between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m. as they entered the building. The student initially reported the incident at 10 a.m. on March 28.

The victim told police she met the men the previous night at Charles Boulevard and 11th Street when they stopped to ask for directions to the Tar River area.

The suspects left the campus in a late 1980s or early 1990s dark green Chevrolet Camaro. The vehicle was described as having tinted rear windows and a red interior. The description of the car suggests that it had been repainted or the interior had been replaced, according to ECU police.

“We would like to thank all the people who called in with tips in this case,” Tevepaugh said. “We would also like to thank the other law enforcement agencies who provided ECU police investigators with information.”

The March assault was the second reported in a dorm on the ECU campus this year. A resident of Green Hall reported she may have been assaulted on Feb. 10 between 12:45 a.m. and 3 a.m. in a bathroom.

Little information was provided about that assault, and no arrest was made.

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N.C. tackles possible swine flu cases

The state lab expects answers soon, plus testing materials from the CDC in Atlanta.

BY SARAH AVERY, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

A small number of people in North Carolina have suspected cases of the new strain of swine flu that has killed more than 100 in Mexico, but the cases have not been confirmed with laboratory tests.

State health leaders said the number of suspected cases was fewer than 10. They would not give an exact number because several are likely to be ruled out, while others may come to light. Only confirmed cases will be announced, they said.

"We had a suspected case this weekend that turned out to be regular seasonal flu, so that's
why we aren't announcing numbers yet," said Dr. Jeffrey Engel, state health director.

Confirmation of the virus will likely not occur until Wednesday at the earliest, after additional laboratory analysis in Atlanta. The virus is so new that only scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have the material to detect it. Engel said that testing agent will be shipped to the state's lab and others across the nation Wednesday, but until then the labs will need to rely on federal authorities for confirmation.

All the North Carolina patients suspected of having swine flu are recovering with fairly mild symptoms at home, and no one has been sick enough to go to the hospital. Engel said most had recently returned from Mexico.

Engel encouraged people to postpone trips to Mexico until more is known about the new flu strain, which combines the genetic traits of swine, human and avian viruses. The bug resembles a strain common to hogs, so it's being called swine flu.

Despite its name, no animals in North Carolina's vast hog industry have been sickened by the new virus, and it is not transmitted to people through pork products. Engel cautioned residents to remain vigilant about good hand washing and hygiene, because the bug appears to pass easily between humans.

Already, cases have been confirmed in Europe, and there are at least 48 confirmed in the United States, though most have caused only mild symptoms.

That factor is puzzling, given the deaths in Mexico. Engel said additional tests will determine whether the people in Mexico died of the new flu virus or from an opportunistic bacteria that triggered a deadly bout of pneumonia.

It also is unknown how the virus has morphed to infect humans so readily and why it is circulating now, just as seasonal flu is tapering off in North America.

If the disease spreads rapidly, it could be declared a pandemic, meaning it has widespread geographic reach.

"Pandemic flu is probably the worst of all public health disasters because it affects people in a person-to-person fashion," Engel said.

But he said the state's public health response -- crafted in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorism attacks -- has already been set in motion as if a pandemic has been declared.

The state has antiviral medicine on hand to treat more than 660,000 people and has ordered about 25 percent of its share of the national stockpile that is expected to be delivered within a week.

Hospitals, public health clinics, doctors' offices and other sites are on alert around the state to flag any illnesses that might be the new flu strain.

"The strength of the public health infrastructure is exceptional," said Dr. Myron Cohen, an infectious disease expert and director of the Center for HIV/STDs and Infectious Disease at UNC-Chapel Hill.

'Don't want to cry wolf'

Cohen said doctors at UNC-CH and other academic medical centers are working with the state to assure that people would get treated if the flu struck by the thousands.

But aside from training and planning, there are few real-life situations to serve as models. An outbreak of a new respiratory virus called SARS in 2003 put the state and nation on high alert after patients died in Canada. But the virus fizzled out, and widespread infections never occurred.
Cohen said SARS was much different than a potential flu pandemic, particularly because doctors didn't know what they were dealing with. Flu, he said, "didn't come from outer space. We know what happens."

Even so, when the word pandemic gets attached to a disease outbreak, it can cause panic.

"You don't want to cry wolf," said Christine Layton, an influenza researcher at RTI International. "First off, you lose your credibility, and when there really is pandemic, people are going to shrug their shoulders."

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Patients' symptoms were relatively mild, officials say; In Mexico, 149 have died, and people say help is slow to come

**Swine flu symptoms**

Fever greater than 100 degrees
Sore throat
Cough
Stuffy nose
Chills
Headache and body aches
Fatigue

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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- What to know about swine flu
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What to know about swine flu

The Associated Press
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Here's what you need to know about swine flu:

Q: What is swine flu?

Pigs spread their own strains of influenza and every so often people catch one, usually after contact with the animals. This new strain is a mix of pig viruses with some human and bird viruses. Unlike more typical swine flu, it is spreading person to person.

Q: How easy is it to catch this virus?

Scientists don't yet know if it takes fairly close or prolonged contact with someone who's sick, or if it's more easily spread. But in general, flu viruses spread through uncovered coughs and sneezes or -- by touching your mouth or nose with unwashed hands. Flu viruses can live on surfaces for several hours, like a doorknob just touched by someone who sneezed into his hand.

Q: What are the symptoms?

Fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting.

Q: How do I protect myself and my family?

For now, take common-sense precautions. Cover your coughs and sneezes, with a tissue that you throw away or by sneezing into your elbow rather than your hand. Wash hands frequently; if soap and water aren't available, hand gels can substitute. Stay home if you're sick and keep children home from school if they are.

Q: In Mexico, officials are handing out face masks. Do I need one?

The CDC says there's not good evidence that masks really help outside of health-care settings. It's safer just to avoid close contact with someone who's sick and avoid crowded gatherings in places where swine flu is known to be spreading. But if you can't do that, CDC guidelines say it's OK to consider a mask.

Q: Is swine flu treatable?

Yes, with the flu drugs Tamiflu or Relenza.

Q: Is there enough?

Yes. The federal government has stockpiled enough of the drugs to treat 50 million people, and many states have additional stocks. As a precaution, the CDC has shipped a quarter of that supply to the states to keep on hand just in case the virus starts spreading more than it has so far.
Q: Is there a vaccine to prevent this new infection?

No. And CDC's initial testing suggests that last winter's flu shot didn't offer any cross-protection.

Q: How long would it take to produce a vaccine?

A few months. The CDC has created what's called "seed stock" of the new virus that manufacturers would need to start production. But the government hasn't yet decided if the outbreak is bad enough to order that.

Q: Is it safe to eat pork?

Yes. Swine influenza viruses don't spread through food.

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