THE DAILY CLIPS

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ECU's military program chief honored by Army ROTC

By ECU News Bureau
Special to The Daily Reflector

Steve Duncan, East Carolina University director of military programs, was honored May 3 with the General William E. DePuy Award, presented by the U.S. Army Cadet Command.

The award is considered the most prestigious honor given by the U.S. Army Cadet Command, the parent organization of the Army ROTC program, and has been presented only to two other individuals.

The award recognizes an individual who has provided significant support to the local or national Army ROTC program.

Brig. Gen. Arnold N. Gordon-Bray, the deputy commanding general of Cadet Command, officiated at a ceremony that honored this year's graduates of both the Army and the Air Force ROTC programs at ECU. Also present at the event was Col. William T. Wiseman, the commander of the Fourth ROTC Brigade.

Gordon-Bray praised Duncan for his continuing efforts on behalf of the ROTC program at ECU. He noted that Duncan's previous service as the deputy commander of the U.S. Army Training Support Center and in other key governmental assignments also had significantly contributed to the success of the Army.

While a civilian employee of the federal government, Duncan earned the Superior Service Award, the Meritorious Civilian Service Award and the Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service -- the highest award presented to civilian employees of the Army.

Online program recognized

ECU's online master's of science program in Computer Science and Technology Systems was named a "best buy" from an organization that evaluates online degree programs.

GetEducated.com, which serves as a clearinghouse to showcase and evaluate accredited online degrees, employs college experts to review each online program. In 2007, ECU's online MBA and education degrees ranked one and three, respectively.

ECU's master's program in computer science ranked seventh out of 68 programs nationwide. Housed in the College of Technology and Computer Science, the program offers four master's of science degrees: computer science; computer networking management; data communications technology; and information security.

Program seeks to help veterans

A program to assist mental health professionals working with returning war veterans

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will be offered May 29-30.
The May 29 session will focus on mental health problems of service members returning from active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. It will be held at 5:45-9 p.m. at the Edwin W. Monroe Eastern AHEC Conference Center, 2000 Venture Tower Drive, Greenville. The program is aimed at primary care physicians, psychiatrists, nurse practitioners and physician assistants.
The May 30 workshop will help mental health professionals apply clinical skills to their work with these veterans and their families. It will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Pitt County Agricultural Center, 403 Government Circle, Greenville.
Speakers for these events include Dr. Harold Kudler, mental health coordinator for Veterans Affairs medical centers in North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia; Dr. Vince Arnold, retired Navy and director of the Deployment Health Center at Camp Lejeune; Dr. Kristy Straits-Troster, clinical psychologist with Veterans Affairs.
The events are sponsored by the Eastern Area Health Education Center, the Southeast Area Health Education Center, the N.C. Citizen Soldier Support Program, the Veterans Administration and others.

For more information, call (813)-792-5560, Ext. 100 or visit http://eahec.ecu.edu/calendar/mental.cfm?category=mental_health.

Engineering grads donate

ECU’s first graduating class of 22 engineers donated $1,500 to ECU’s Engineering Foundation. The announcement was made at the College of Technology and Computer Science Recognition Ceremony on May 10.
“This generous and forward-thinking gift is the start of alumni involvement in the engineering program,” said Paul Kauffmann, chairman of the engineering department.
“Our first graduates have demonstrated their commitment to enhancing engineering access by this donation which will focus on scholarships and financial support for future students.”

Business sets scholarship mark

The College of Business recognized 96 undergraduate and graduate students with scholarships at an awards banquet on April 29.
The scholarships totaled $120,000 for the 2008-09 academic year – almost doubling last year’s sum of $65,000.
“These scholarships reflect the generosity of our alumni, faculty, and friends – they have shared their success so that others can succeed,” said Frederick Niswander, dean of the College of Business.

Trujillo named chair of OT

Leonard G. Trujillo has been named chairman of the Department of Occupational Therapy in the College of Allied Health Sciences.
Trujillo, who holds a doctoral degree, has been an occupational therapist for 30 years with the majority of his clinical experience in the U.S. Air Force. He was the only USAF officer to have held the position of director of OT programs at two of the Army’s Academy of Health Sciences, Fort Sam Houston, Texas.
Prior to joining ECU, he was an associate professor and associate dean at the School of Occupational Therapy at Texas Woman’s University in Dallas.
He serves as the director of the ECU Occupational Therapy Assistive Technology Certification program and conducts research in the area of older adult drivers.
Dr. Leonard Wilk and Dr. Midesha Pillay have joined the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and its group practice, ECU Physicians.

Wilk joined the Department of Family Medicine as a clinical assistant professor. He has a bachelor's degree from the University of California-Riverside and a medical degree from Karol Marconkowski University of Medical Sciences in Poland. He completed a residency in family medicine and a fellowship in geriatrics at ECU.

Wilk is board-certified in family medicine. His clinical interests are hospital medicine, dementia, stroke and osteoporosis. He sees patients at the Eastern Carolina Family Medicine Center.

Pillay also joined the Department of Family Medicine as a clinical assistant professor. She has bachelor's and medical degrees from the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. She completed residency training in family medicine and a geriatrics fellowship at ECU. Before coming to ECU, she practiced in California, South Africa and the United Kingdom. She is board-certified in family medicine and geriatrics.

Pillay's clinical interest is geriatric medicine. She sees patients at the Firetower Medical Office.
A pioneering program for students from low-income families has just graduated with honors at UNC-Chapel Hill. The first Carolina Covenant students, part of the UNC class admitted in fall 2004, have received their degrees.

Through earnings from campus jobs and substantial financial aid, Carolina Covenant students graduate debt-free.

Thousands and thousands of dollars in student loans have burdened a generation of college grads. Skyrocketing tuition costs, coupled with inadequate scholarships and grants, forced many students deep into debt. The traditional formula of paying for college with family savings, summer jobs and/or part-time work no longer produced a solution to the high-tuition equation.

Middle-class students graduated to a world that wanted its money back. Potential students from low-income families, all but a lucky few, were intimidated by the prospects and didn't even apply.

That hasn't changed entirely. But there's a welcome new emphasis, in Chapel Hill and elsewhere, on easing or even eliminating reliance on loans for families at most income levels. And tuition hikes seem to be getting more scrutiny — as they should (low tuition, a UNC tradition and constitutional mandate, is itself an effective scholarship program).

For low-income families, the Carolina Covenant and programs such as the Pack Promise at N.C. State University are the ultimate in affordability. And relatively low tuition and high academic quality are factors in Chapel Hill's designation by Kiplinger's magazine as the best value in U.S. higher education.

Nearly 1,400 students have benefitted from the Covenant program. The ceiling on family income is about $41,300 for a family of four, or $27,380 for a single-parent family. Students must work on campus 10 to 12 hours weekly for four years. The program provides academic and personal counseling for its students, who are, in many cases, the first from their families to attend college.

It's an outstanding package, and among public universities UNC-Chapel Hill was a national leader. Congratulations to the (debt-free) graduates.
Many-Legged Neil Young

Neil Young, below left, already a singer and songwriter, is now spider man. No, not Peter Parker of comic book fame, but the man whose name has been bestowed on a new species of spider.

The tribute was rendered to the 62-year-old musician by Jason E. Bond, a biologist at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C., who discovered a new trapdoor spider and chose to call it Myrmekiaphila neil-youngi, above. In a statement Dr. Bond said: "There are rather strict rules about how you name new species. As long as these rules are followed, you can give a new species just about any name you please. With regards to Neil Young, I really enjoy his music and have a great appreciation of him as an activist for peace and justice."
Nancy N. Darden

Nancy Newson Darden was born Sept. 2, 1921, in Durham to Annie Laurie Long Newson and Marion Eugene Newson and was the sixth of seven children, four boys and three girls.

Nancy was very creative, enthusiastic about living and had a wonderful sense of humor, which she employed often while sharing experiences and telling jokes and stories with friends and within her big family, all of whom she truly loved.

She attended Durham public schools and was an active member of Trinity United Methodist Church, where she sang in the choir. She had a beautiful voice, which gave enjoyment to everyone who heard her sing. Upon graduation from Durham High School, she completed business school and worked as a medical secretary.

On Feb. 15, 1947, Nancy married James Henry Darden Jr. (she called him Jimmy) of Farmville. For years, she and her family resided in Farmville, where she served her community as an aircraft spotter and trainer in the 1950s and was a participating member of various social and service organizations.

Nancy was totally committed to her family, church and friends and was an active member and sang in the choir of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Farmville, later joining St. Paul's Episcopal Church and their choir when the family moved to Greenville.

She was a wonderful cook and while in Farmville and Greenville provided recipes for, and helped publish cookbooks by her church groups. She read widely and had interests in genealogy and local history. As a member of the Pitt County Historical Society, she helped write and assist in the publishing of The Pitt County Chronicles. She was also an employee of Joyner Library at East Carolina University.

Late in their life together, Nancy and Jimmy, by then both retired, moved permanently to what had been their home-away-from-home in Atlantic Beach, N.C. Nancy, however, though she enjoyed being with her husband in Atlantic Beach, never forgot her roots, the lives she had lived and the people, homes and places she loved in Durham, Farmville and Greenville.

Both Nancy and Jimmy together, in March 2007, entered a retirement home in Tarboro, where he subsequently died on March 26, 2007. In February 2008, she relocated to a retirement home in Kennewick, Wash., to be closer to her daughter.

Nancy's health had been steadily declining prior to her move to Tarboro. She passed away quietly in Kennewick, Wash., the night of May 6. A graveside service was held May 16 at Forest Hills Cemetery in Farmville.

She was preceded by her husband of 60 years, James Henry Darden Jr. and by her brothers, Marion Eugene Newson Jr., James Long Newson and sister, Mary Toms Ward Campbell.

Nancy is survived by her children, James Henry Darden III of Greenville, Susan Darden Henwood, of Kennewick, Wash., and Durston (Dusty) Reeder Darden of Sanford.

She also is survived by a sister, Annie Laurie Newson Bugg of Chatham County and two brothers, John Walton Newson of Lawrence, Kan., and Edward E. "Ned" Newson of Durham, along with seven grandchildren, one great-grandchild and numerous nieces and nephews.

We have lost our mother and our country has lost another of its Greatest Generation. Good night, Mother. Sweet dreams. God bless you. We love you.

Jim, Susan and Dusty.
UVA finds keys to success

Graduation rate high among blacks

BY SUSAN KINZER
THE WASHINGTON POST

More black students graduate from the University of Virginia within six years than from any other public university in the country, and here's why: institutional commitment, an admissions process that selects strong students, generous financial aid and network of peer advisers. Not only that, they've got Sylvia erry, the associate dean of Afri-american affairs. She has revealed the high expectations and support she learned from her parents, her small town and the historically black college her family attended.

She is trying, one by one, to ensure that these students get the intellectual, cultural and economic benefits of a college degree. She makes them cakes, e-mails them encouragements and expects them to make the grade. She will celebrate with a hundred of them at a graduation ceremony today.

"Sometimes you can point to a person who makes such a difference," said John Blackmon, director of admissions. "She nurtures every kid who comes through the door."

Race relations at UVA have never been perfect, and in recent years there have been flare-ups of racist graffiti and other issues. But there is an institutional commitment from President John Casteen III on down to ensure that black students stay in school and graduate.

The school provides generous financial aid for needy families and emphasizes recruiting, academic support and an intense system of mentoring that Terry has set up.

Nationally, there is a gap of nearly 20 points between the percentage of black and white students who graduate. Just 44 percent of black students finish within six years, according to the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, which has found UVA to be the leader "by far" among public schools for the past 14 years.

The most recent figure from UVA, for black students who began college in 2001, is just shy of 90 percent. That rate is lower than those at the top schools in the country (Harvard has steadily been in the mid-90s). But it is better than at most of the schools UVA considers peers, such as the University of California at Berkeley, UNC-Chapel Hill, Cornell University and Vanderbilt University.

The reasons some black students drop out include cost, poor academic preparation from weak high schools, the racial climate and a lack of support because there isn't a family tradition of college, according to Bruce Slater, the journal's managing editor.

One of the earliest black students at UVA told Terry he always looked up at the dorm room of the school's first black undergrad to earn a degree, Robert Bland. "He was always on; Bland was always studying" The young student would tell himself, if Bobby Bland can do it, I can.

It turned into a saying among the black students at UVA: Bobby stayed.

Terry kept it in mind. "I wanted to make sure that when students came to UVA, they didn't just come. As Bobby stayed, I wanted them to stay."

She said studies show that students are more likely to stay if they feel engaged and involved in a place and feel they have people to turn to. "It's so much easier to leave a place if you haven't built up connections," Terry said. "It's so much easier to leave if no one has shown an interest in you." She paused and smiled. "We want it to not be easy."
Obese kids face life of problems

Health, psychological issues more likely

BY SUSAN LEVINE AND ROB STEIN
THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON — An epidemic of obesity is compromising the lives of millions of American children, with burgeoning problems that reveal how much more vulnerable young bodies are to the toxic effects of fat.

In ways only beginning to be understood, being overweight at a young age appears to be far more destructive to well-being than adding excess pounds later in life. Virtually every major organ is at risk. The greater damage is probably irreversible.

Doctors are seeing confirmation of this daily: boys and girls in elementary school suffering from high blood pressure, high cholesterol and painful joint conditions; a soaring incidence of type 2 diabetes, once a rarity in pediatricians’ offices; even a spike in child gallstones, also once a singularly adult affliction.

With one in three children in this country overweight or worse, the future health and productivity of an entire generation — and a nation — could be in jeopardy.

“There’s a huge burden of disease that we can anticipate from the growing obesity in kids,” said William H. Dietz, director of the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity at the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “This is a wave that is just moving through the population.”

The trouble is a quarter century of unprecedented growth in girth. Although the rest of the nation is much heavier, too, among those ages 6 to 19 the rate of obesity has not just doubled, as with their parents and grandparents, but has more than tripled.

Because studies indicate that many will never overcome their overweight — up to 80 percent of obese teens become obese adults — experts fear an exponential increase in heart disease, strokes, cancer and other health problems as the children move into their 20s and beyond.

The evidence suggests that these conditions could occur decades sooner and could greatly diminish the quality of their lives. Many could find themselves dis-
times more costly than treating the average child, according to a study by Thomson Reuters. The research company pegged the country’s overall expense of care for overweight youth at $14 billion annually. A substantial portion is for hospital services, since those patients go more frequently to the emergency room and are two to three times more likely to be admitted.

Given the ominous trend lines, the study concluded, “demand for ER visits, inpatient hospitalizations and outpatient visits is expected to rise dramatically.”

Ultimately, the economic calculations will climb higher. No one has looked ahead 30 years to project this group’s long-term disability and lost earnings, but based on research on the current workforce, which has shown tens of millions of workdays missed annually, indirect costs will also be enormous.

Childhood obesity is nothing less than “a national catastrophe,” acting U.S. Surgeon General Steven Galson has declared. The individual toll is equally tragic. “Many of these kids may never escape the corrosive health, psychosocial and economic costs of their obesity,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, president of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which has committed at least $500 million over five years to the problem.

Trouble before birth

The cycle of obesity and disease seems to begin before birth: Women who are overweight are more likely to give birth to bigger babies, who are more likely to become obese. “And so you build it up over generations,” said Matthew Gillman, associate professor of ambulatory care and prevention at Harvard Medical School. “You get an intergenerational vicious cycle of obesity and disease.”

In-utero exposure is just part of an exceedingly complex picture. Patterns of eating and activity, often set during early childhood, are influenced by government and education policies, cultural factors and environmental changes. Income and ethnicity are implicated, though these days virtually every community has a problem.

The extra pounds appear to weigh more heavily on bodies that are still forming. Fat cells, researchers have found, pump out a host of hormones and other chemicals that might permanently rewire metabolism.

“A child is not just a little adult. They are still developing and changing. Their systems are still in a process of maturing and being finely tuned,” said David S. Ludwig, an obesity expert at Children’s Hospital in Boston. “Being excessively heavy could distort this natural process of growth and development in ways that irreversibly affect the biological pathways.”

As many as 90 percent of overweight children have at least one of a half-dozen avoidable risk factors for heart disease. Even with the most modest increase in future adolescent obesity, a recent study said the U.S. will face more than 100,000 additional cases of coronary heart disease by 2035.

Effects can be obvious

The internal damage does not always take medical testing to diagnose. It is visible as a child laboriously climbs a flight of stairs or tries to sit at a classroom desk, much less rise out of it.

On a playground, obesity exacts a cruel price.

“It robs them of their childhood, really,” said Melinda S. Sothern of the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans. “They’re robbed of the natural enjoyment of being a kid — being able to play outside, run. If they have high blood pressure, they have a constant risk of stroke.”

Physical therapist Brian H. Wrottiak, who works with overweight youth at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, hears resignation more than anger in his patients’ voices. “They complain of simple things like tying their shoes. They can’t bend down and tie their shoes because excess fat gets in the way,” he said.

Their usual solution: Velcro sneakers.

The emotional distress of these ailments, combined with the social stigma of being fat, makes overweight children prone to psychiatric and behavioral troubles. One analysis found that obese youth were seven times more likely to be depressed.

“Obese children are victimized and bullied,” said Jeffrey B. Schwimmer, a pediatric gastroenterologist at the University of California at San Diego and Rady Children’s Hospital in San Diego. “Not only do other children treat them differently, but teachers treat them differently. And if you look at obese adolescents, their acceptance into college differs. For obese girls, their socioeconomic status is lower. It cuts a broad swath.”
More docs admit to errors

They find integrity in honest regret

BY KEVIN SACK
THE NEW YORK TIMES

CHICAGO — In 40 years as a highly regarded cancer surgeon, Dr. Tapas K. Das Gupta had never made a mistake like this.

As with any doctor, there had been occasional errors in diagnosis or judgment. But never, he said, had he opened up a patient and removed the wrong slice of tissue, in this case a segment of the eighth rib instead of the ninth.

Once an X-ray provided proof in black and white, Das Gupta, the 74-year-old chairman of surgical oncology at the University of Illinois Medical Center at Chicago, did something that normally would make hospital lawyers cringe: He acknowledged his mistake to his patient’s face and told her he was deeply sorry.

For decades, malpractice lawyers and insurers have counseled doctors and hospitals to “deny and defend.” Many still warn clients that any admission of fault, or even expression of regret, is likely to invite litigation and imperil careers.

But with providers choking on malpractice costs and consumers demanding action against medical errors, a handful of prominent academic medical centers, like Johns Hopkins and Stanford, are trying a disarming approach. By promptly disclosing medical errors, and offering earnest apologies and fair compensation, they hope to restore integrity to their dealings with patients, make it easier to learn from mistakes and dilute the anger that often fuels lawsuits.

Malpractice lawyers say that what often transforms a reasonable patient into an indignant plaintiff is less an error than its concealment, and the victim’s concern that it will happen again.

Despite some projections that disclosure would prompt a flood of lawsuits, hospitals are reporting decreases in their caseloads and savings in legal costs.

At the University of Michigan Health System, one of the first to experiment with full disclosure, existing claims and lawsuits dropped to 83 in August 2007 from 262 in August 2001, said Richard C. Boothman, the medical center’s chief risk officer.

“Improving patient safety and patient communication is more likely to cure the malpractice crisis than defensiveness and denial,” Boothman said.

Boothman emphasized that he could not know whether the decline was because of disclosure or safer medicine, or both. But the hospital’s legal defense costs and the money it must set aside to pay claims have each been cut by two-thirds, he said. The time taken to dispose of cases has been halved.

The number of malpractice filings against the University of Illinois has dropped by half since it started its program just over two years ago, said Dr. Timothy B. McDonald, the hospital’s chief safety and risk officer. In the 37 cases where the hospital acknowledged a preventable error and apologized, only one patient has sued.

In Das Gupta’s case in 2006, the patient retained a lawyer but decided not to sue, and after a brief negotiation, accepted $74,000 from the hospital, said her lawyer, David J. Fritchard.

“She told me that the doctor was completely candid, completely honest, and so frank that she and her husband — usually the husband wants to pound the guy — that all the anger was gone,” Fritchard said.

Some advocates argue that the new disclosure policies may reduce legal claims but bring a greater measure of equity by offering reasonable compensation to every injured patient.

Recent studies have found that one of every 100 hospital patients suffers negligent treatment and that as many as 98,000 die each year as a result. But studies also show that as few as 30 percent of medical errors are disclosed to patients.

Only a small fraction of injured patients — perhaps 2 percent — press legal claims.

“There is no reason the patient should have to pay the economic consequences for our mistakes,” said Dr. Lucian L. Leape, an authority on patient safety at Harvard, which recently adopted disclosure principles at its hospitals.

“But we’re pushing uphill on this. Most doctors don’t really believe that if they’re open and honest with patients they won’t be sued.”
Handling mistakes

At the University of Illinois, doctors, nurses and medical students now undergo extensive training in how to respond when things go wrong. An anonymous tip line has helped drive a 30 percent increase in staff reporting of irregularities.

Quality improvement committees openly examine cases that once would have vanished into sealed courthouse files. Errors become teaching opportunities rather than badges of shame.

"I think this is the key to patient safety in the country," McDonald said. "If you do this with a transparent point of view, you're more likely to figure out what's wrong and put processes in place to improve it."

For instance, he said, a sponge left inside an obstetrical patient led the hospital to start X-raying patients during and after surgery. Eight objects have been found, one of them an electrode that dislodged from a baby's scalp during a Caesarean section in 2006.

The mother, Maria Del Rosario Valdez, said she was not happy that a second operation was required to retrieve the wire but recognized the error had been accidental. She rejected her sister's advice to call a lawyer, saying she did not want the bother and that her injuries were not that severe.

Valdez said she was gratified that the hospital quickly acknowledged its mistake, corrected it without charge and later improved procedures for keeping track of electrodes. "They took the time to explain it and to tell me they were sorry," she said. "I felt good that they were taking care of what they had done."
Colleges await more advice on illegals

BY KRISTIN COLLINS
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH - Community College System President Scott Ralls said Friday that he will happily admit illegal immigrants if he gets new legal advice.

"I believe that broadly available education has more social benefit than social cost," Ralls said after a meeting of the State Board of Community Colleges. "We just need to know the rules."

Some board members also said Friday that they want to open their doors to illegal immigrants but think their hands are tied.

"We have no choice but to follow the advice of the [state] Attorney General's Office," said board member Joanne Steiner, a retired executive from Wake Forest. "In this case, that's not where our hearts are. ... I feel very sad about it."

The system this week barred illegal immigrants from seeking degrees at all 58 of its campuses, a position that legal experts say is the most restrictive in the nation.

College officials based the decision on a May 6 advisory letter from Attorney General Roy Cooper's office. That letter said federal law appears to prohibit illegal immigrants from getting post-secondary education at state colleges and universities and recommended that the community colleges seek more information from the federal Department of Homeland Security, which enforces the law.

Several board members, along with Ralls, said they are waiting for the Attorney General's Office to provide more clarity on what federal law allows. Once they get that clarity, they said, they will consider whether to reverse their position on educating students regardless of legal status.

In the meantime, they said, they must follow the legal advice they have.

They said they could not rely on a statement from the Department of Homeland Security, made to The News & Observer last week, which said North Carolina has au-

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thority to determine who is admitted to its colleges.

Ralls said he met with the Attorney General's Office on Monday to ask whether the statement had changed their advice. "They said their advice stood," Ralls said.

Board members agreed that they could not rely on a statement from Homeland Security unless it came through the Attorney General's Office.

"The law is interpreted for us by the Attorney General's Office," said board member Jim Daniels, who owns a graphics business in Asheville. "Homeland Security's not the Attorney General's Office. ... If the AG changes, we'll change."

Officials in Cooper's office said they have asked the federal government for clarification of the law, which they called "unsettled."

The University of North Carolina System will continue admitting illegal immigrants at out-of-state tuition rates until the clarification is received.
Sad news for the East

It was sad to read that Jerry Allegood will no longer be reporting on Eastern North Carolina ("N&O veteran who reported on Eastern N.C. retires," May 15). He has done a splendid job of telling the stories of the proud coastal region that has struggled to prosper like the Piedmont but that now frequently outshines its neighbors to the west.

Even sadder is the news that The N&O is closing its Greenville bureau. While the shutdown may be necessary to save money, the consequence is that there will no longer be a reporter living and working in the hub of the eastern third of our state.

This will keep N&O subscribers from reading first-hand accounts of all the wonderful things happening every day in an area that is emerging as a distinguished and contributing part of North Carolina.

Jerry Allegood and the Greenville bureau will be truly missed.

Herb Garrison
Greenville
Early college programs widen learning horizons

Trailblazing high school in Durham to hold first graduation ceremony today

BY SAMIHA KHANNA
STAFF WRITER

DURHAM — When James Blackwell and his classmates from the Josephine Dobbs Clement Early College High School toss up their graduation caps today, they'll be celebrating more than receiving high school diplomas.

Many of them are also well on the way to earning a degree at N.C. Central University — for free.

The 60 students who will graduate from Early College High, based on the NCCU campus, have spent the past four years earning both high school diplomas and undergraduate college credits.

The school is a small public high school, a model that is catching on across the state and nation, helping more students seek a higher education.

OTHER TRIANGLE PROGRAMS

WAKE COUNTY: Two years ago, Wake schools collaborated with WakeMed and Wake Technical Community College to open the Wake Early College of Health and Sciences in Raleigh, where students study health careers.

JOHNSTON COUNTY: An early college will open this fall at Johnston Community College.

CHATHAM COUNTY: School officials plan to open an early college high in the next two years.

"It demystifies college," Principal Nick King said. "There is a great deal of power in seeing college students and seeing that they are people just like them."

And although there are now more than 40 similar programs in North Carolina, Blackwell and his classmates are trailblazers.

Durham's program was the first in the state four years ago. Today it produces its first graduating class.

"I felt that I could excel in this situation and really be a pioneer," Blackwell said. "I had the opportunity to do something that no one else had ever done."

Other Triangle counties are not far behind. The Wake Early College of Health and Sciences opened in Raleigh two years ago. Plans are in the works for similar programs in Johnston and Chatham counties.

The schools have been launched across the country with money from charitable trusts including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In North Carolina, the schools

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are administered by the N.C. New Schools Project.

The Durham school started with 84 students in 2004 and has grown to more than 300. Students spend their first two years of high school in regular core classes, then transition to college-level courses in their junior and senior years, earning up to two years' credit.

If the students stay at NCCU, as 40 of the graduates plan to do, their full tuition is paid for two years.

A financial worry

Being a single mother of three, Donna Fulcher said she wasn't sure what it would take to afford college for her youngest, David.

"It would have been difficult," she said. "Or maybe he would have been off to the military."

But when the school opened at NCCU four years ago, then-Chancellor James Ammons promised the students that if they stuck with the program, he would make sure their tuition was paid.

"I'm so proud of them making it to this day," Donna Fulcher said of her son and his classmates. "A huge burden has been lifted off of us."

David Fulcher was not a standout middle-schooler, earning B's and C's. Though very bright, he was never pulled out of class with students who were labeled gifted and talented.

Yet he succeeded in his college-level courses — including English, math, philosophy and sociology with much older students. It took hard work, study groups and tutoring, he said.

"This really lifted David educationally," his mother said. "He's really had to buckle down, but now he knows he can do it."

Unlike other accelerated high school programs, the early college focuses on taking middle-of-the-road students and pushing them to higher goals.

The schools try to recruit students who are generally under-represented in higher education, including non-native English speakers who are still perfecting the language and those whose parents did not attend college.

"Most important to us is the willingness on the part of the kid to engage in a pointed study," said King, the principal. "It's not necessary for a kid to be the best student. It's necessary for a kid to be willing to put in the work."

The graduation will take place at 3 p.m. today at NCCU's McDougald-McLendon Gymnasium on Lawson Street.

samiha.khanna@newsobserver.com or (919) 956-2468
Bus victim was to return to Scotland

Lisa Moran, run over and killed Thursday, had been studying at the UNC School of Law.

BY JESSE JAMES DECONTO STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL - Lisa Moran was days away from returning to her native Scotland when a bus struck and killed her Thursday morning.

Moran, a third-year student in law and economics at Glasgow University, had come to Chapel Hill in January to spend a semester studying at the UNC School of Law.

"We are deeply saddened by this news, and our sincerest condolences go out to all of her friends and family, both here and in her native Scotland," law school Dean Jack Boger wrote in a letter to law students, staff and faculty.

Hailing from the city of Paisley in Renfrewshire county just southwest of Glasgow, Moran had grown to love "the sunny city of Chapel Hill," according to her online profile at bebo.com. Law school exams ended May 2, but she had planned to stay nearly three weeks longer.

"In her few months in North Carolina, she became a fan of Tar Heel basketball, peanut butter s'mores, the TV show "Girlie-cious," Starbucks caramel lattes, French martinis and 25-cent beers from the East End Martini Bar on Franklin Street.

"[I] have decided I am never coming back to Paisley, land of rain," she wrote. "Although I miss my friends and family the most... so if I could just move u all out here that would be ideal, thanks."

Police are still investigating the accident to learn exactly what happened.

Moran died while jogging near UNC Hospitals. Her death underscored some medical students' concerns about pedestrian safety on Manning Drive. A bridge across the street is planned near the accident scene, though using it would require taking an elevator or climbing a long staircase from the sidewalk.

Moran loved skiing and snowboarding, gymnastics, dancing and squash — a sport in which her younger brother Kevin is one of Scotland's top young players.

"I love sport so will try anything, really!!" she wrote.

She enjoyed the Harry Potter books, written after author J.K. Rowling left England for Scotland.

"Not the films because they totally spoil it," she wrote. "Call me a sadist if you like, I don't care!"

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