THE DAILY CLIPS

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Discovery shows promise

ECU find may aid cancer battles

ECU News Bureau

A discovery by an East Carolina University pathologist might be a breakthrough in an evolving class of drugs used to fight cancer.

Dr. Anne Kellogg has developed a monoclonal antibody that could play a vital role in treating the most common form of ovarian cancer, breast cancer and other cancers. She is working with two major drug firms, ImmunoGen Inc. and Sanofi-Aventis, that have expertise in formulating antibodies into cancer therapies and taking them to clinical trials in humans.

Kellogg, an associate professor of pathology and laboratory medicine at the Brody School of Medicine at ECU, created the antibody, called DS-6, that attaches to cancer cells in her laboratory at ECU. DS-6 will serve as a delivery vehicle for a highly potent cell-killing agent developed by ImmunoGen specifically for delivery to cancer cells by antibodies. The antibody latches on to tumor cells and enables the whole compound – the antibody and the attached cell-killing agent – to enter the cancer cell. Once inside, the cell-killing agent becomes activated and kills the tumor cell as it divides.

"We can't give such a potent chemotherapy agent on its own because it would be too toxic, but if we can link it to an antibody, it goes inside the tumor cell and is released inside the tumor cell, which is really an amazing feat," Kellogg said.

The antibody with the cell-killing agent linked to it circulates in the body in an inactive state. The cell-killing agent becomes active only when it reaches the tumor cell, so ImmunoGen refers to its technology as Tumor-Activated Prodrug, or TAP, technology. Sanofi-Aventis has rights to develop specific anticancer agents using ImmunoGen's TAP technology and is in charge of advancing the TAP compound containing the DS-6 antibody licensed from ECU into human clinical testing.

Monoclonal antibodies are manufactured proteins, produced from a single par-
ent cell, that bind to a specific substance. They can be used to detect or purify that substance and are widely used in hospital and pathology laboratories as components of diagnostic tests. Monoclonal antibodies gained attention as a possible way to treat cancer in the 1980s. In the 1990s, scientists refined techniques to expand their usefulness as therapeutics by making subtle changes to the antibodies so the human body would not reject them as foreign tissue. One of the best-known monoclonal antibodies is trastuzumab, sold under the brand name Herceptin and used to treat breast cancer.

Kellogg began working with monoclonal antibodies in the early 1990's looking for ones pathologists could use to diagnose cancer. Several years later, working with Dr. Diane Semer, a gynecologic oncologist formerly with ECU, Kellogg turned her attention to identifying an antibody that could not only recognize tumors but also be useful in treating them. She isolated DS-6 in the late 1990s and then began characterizing the antibody for its ability to recognize various types of cancer with the help of Dr. Nancy Smith, a former ECU pathologist.

“Drugs that are developed from monoclonal antibodies are potentially more specific for tumors and risk less in the way of toxicity to the patient,” said Dr. Adam Asch, associate director of the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center at ECU.

Kellogg added that the treatment could have benefits even if it falls short of curing cancer.

“You may be able to convert cancer to a very chronic disease you can treat if we can provide oncologists with a wider array of treatment options,” she said.

“This has been an amazing education for me and personally very rewarding to get a ringside seat in seeing the complex process of drug discovery and development take place. It has also demonstrated how well academia, biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies can work together in this process,” Kellogg said.

Kellogg’s research has been funded in part by ECU and the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. “We feel we made a wise investment that will help advance the treatment of cancer by providing funds for Dr. Kellogg’s research,” said Dr. Peter Kragel, chair of the department. Future grants from ImmunoGen and sanofi-aventis are under discussion.
Goal of $200M in sight for ECU

The university is quickly approaching the halfway point of its fundraising goal.

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University has reached nearly half of its $200 million goal to kick off its second century.

The goal of $200 million was announced in March when the public part of the Second Century campaign began.

The capital campaign is the first for the university in 15 years.

To date, $97 million has been raised toward the $200 million goal.

Around $91 million was raised before the campaign was publicly announced.

ECU raised nearly $84 million during the private phase of the campaign, which opened when Chancellor Steve Ballard came to the university in May 2004.

University officials expect to cross the $100 million threshold by June, said Mickey Dowdy, ECU's vice chancellor for university advancement.

"To be halfway by June 30 is a great benchmark for us," Dowdy said.

"I suspect when the economy gets back up we will have more people who are willing to give."

All gifts to the university are counted toward the $200 million goal.

Fifteen percent of the total goal will go to student support, scholarships, financial aid and study-abroad funds, according to university documents.

An additional 28 percent will fund professorships and faculty research.

The rest will go to facilities and specific strategic goals of each ECU college.

Part of the campaign includes a new scholarship.

The Access Scholarship is a need- and merit-based scholarship worth $5,000 to attend ECU.

Eventually the university plans to offer 100 of the scholarships, one for each yearly class in the university's history, Dowdy said.

The goal was originally to offer 50 of the scholarships next year, but the university will have 60 of the scholarships available.

"Some of the planks of the campaign are resonating well with individuals," Dowdy said.

"We have always felt like if we put a good case of needs out there that people will respond, and that is the case. We have a long way to go, but we are doing very well."

Josh Humphries can be contacted at jhumphries@coxnc.com and 329-9565.
Wake Forest joins schools dropping SAT, ACT requirement

By Natasha Robinson
The Associated Press

RALEIGH — Wake Forest University will no longer require applicants to take the SAT and ACT exams, boosting a movement to lessen the importance of standardized tests in college admissions.

The Winston-Salem school, which admitted just 38 percent of its 9,000 applicants for this fall, is the latest in a string of colleges that no longer require standardized tests. Officials there say the scores are not the best predictor of academic potential.

Most other colleges that have dropped standardized testing have not been highly selective and accept most, if not all, qualified applicants.

The most prominent and selective schools have generally continued to use the tests as one of several admissions criteria.

The announcement Tuesday from Wake Forest — on the heels of a similar decision this month by Smith College in Massachusetts — adds two more selective colleges to the movement.

Wake Forest said it was the first of the top 30 schools in the annual U.S. News & World Report college rankings to drop the tests.

Director of Admissions Martha Allman said she has seen students at the top of their class who excelled but did poorly on the SAT and didn’t get in. The school, which did away with the testing requirement while examining how to diversify the student population, will instead place more emphasis on personal interviews, academics and extracurricular activities. Students can still have their test scores considered if they want.

“We in admissions have put up a barrier to these students to say all of your hard work and all of your academic achievement is being negated by one test, and we don’t feel like that is fair,” Allman said. “And it’s not fair, especially if the studies are showing it’s not a good predictor.”

Alana Klein, a spokeswoman for the College Board, which owns the SAT, said there is not a trend toward schools doing so.

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away with standardized tests. She said smaller schools are opting not to weigh SAT or ACT scores because they can take a more holistic approach to admissions, not because of concerns that, as some critics contend, minority and low-income students are at a disadvantage.

“The SAT is a fair test,” she said.

Standardized tests are often the only way colleges can directly measure students from different schools, and large universities — which may have tens of thousands of applications — rely on them.

But critics contend the exams are too stressful and keep some students from showing their real potential. Smith, a highly ranked liberal arts college for women with a

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY will no longer require applicants to take the SAT and ACT exams.

Contributed photo

strong reputation for enrolling low-income students, said its decision was prompted by a correlation between test performance and race and household income.

Despite the latest announcements, independent college admissions consultant Steven Roy Goodman said it is unlikely that most highly selective colleges will stop using standardized tests.

“As much as many people in the university world support the movement toward optional testing, it’s very difficult to assess the quality of courses in high schools around the country and around the world, and to reconcile the different grading systems, and to take into account the grade inflation that we’ve seen in many schools throughout the United States,” he said.

Larger universities, like the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will continue to use standardized tests. Director of Admissions Rob Seltzer said they make a difference in predicting academic success and there’s been no discussion about making them optional.

“They are not the most important factor,” Seltzer said. “They have some weight in the admissions process, but the academic record, the transcript, is much more important.”
State health plan grant focuses on fitness

By ECU News Bureau
Special to The Daily Reflector

When it comes to long-term health care, preventative medicine doesn't come in a pill, said East Carolina University researcher Mike McCammon. It's a daily walk, a bike ride, or a game of tennis. It's going to a meeting on foot rather than by car.

"We know exercise is good medicine," said McCammon, a professor of exercise science, who is overseeing the pilot study. "But how do we get people to adopt and maintain exercise in their schedules?"

How can we get them from being less sedentary and more active?"

A $100,000 grant from the North Carolina State Health Plan has already helped more than 125 ECU and other state employees find ways to integrate physical activity into their lives, working with a team from ECU's College of Health and Human Performance.

The wellness grant started in February, and McCammon said there is room for another 25 participants, open to ECU faculty members, staff, retirees, and non-ECU state employees.

"We know exercise is good medicine," said McCammon, a professor of exercise science, who is overseeing the pilot study. "But how do we get people to adopt and maintain exercise in their schedules?"

Studies by McCammon and his colleagues show, even if weight loss doesn't occur, that exercise has a positive effect on people's health and well-being.

"The glucose tests show that seven days of exercise makes a person go from an insulin-resistant state to an insulin-sensitive state," McCammon said.

Study participants visit the FIT Lab at ECU to undergo an assessment to establish a health baseline.

Each participant receives a pedometer and works with project coordinator Nancy Jo Hodges to develop a set of fitness goals for the four-month program.

Program participants receive a free, four-month membership to a local fitness center: ViQuest, the Student Recreation Center or the Greenville Aquatics and Fitness Center.

They also can attend optional nutrition and fitness workshops.

To register for the program, contact 737-4661 or 737-4665 and mention study No. 98-0042, or visit: http://performance.hpl.ecu.edu/research.

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Approximately 210 people have already signed up.

A new statewide wellness policy encourages the development of workplace wellness programs.

John M. Toller, associate vice chancellor for human resources, was named ECU's employee wellness leader.

McCammon said while diet and weight loss are other contributors to healthiness, physical activity is the key element to this study.

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Two named master educators

Drs. Robert Lust and Robert Tanenberg were named master educators April 24 at ECU's Brody School of Medicine.

Lust, a professor of physiology, joined ECU in 1986 in the Department of Surgery. He has chaired the Department of Physiology since 1998 and also holds faculty appointments in nursing and allied health sciences.

Tanenberg, a professor of in-
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Research day for Brody professor

The annual research day in the Department of Internal Medicine at ECU's Brody School of Medicine has been named for professor emeritus Dr. Yash P. Kataria.

The event will be held Thursday at the Health Sciences Building from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Presentations will be in Room 1156, and scientific posters will be in Room 1102.

The keynote speaker will be Kataria's mentor, Dr. Phil Bromberg of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The Medical & Health Sciences Foundation of ECU plans to raise $100,000 to endow the research day.

Kataria, a pulmonologist, has been on the ECU medical faculty since 1978.

He began the internal medicine annual research day in 1987.

Since 1995, he has been director of the sarcoidosis clinic at ECU and has gained recognition as a worldwide leader in the causes and treatment of this mysterious respiratory disease, which is prevalent in the Southeast.

Tech professor named to board

John Reis, associate dean of the College of Computer Science and Technology, was appointed to the 2008 Board of Examiners for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

As an examiner, Reis is one of about 500 quality experts appointed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology who will evaluate applications submitted for the annual award.

"I am honored to have been selected to serve as an examiner for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Program," Reis said. "My role as an examiner is to help institutions achieve the highest levels of quality in how they conduct their business."

The Baldrige award is the highest level of national recognition for performance excellence that a U.S. organization can receive.

Students receive fellowships

Two ECU masters students were named the first fellows of the RENCI @ ECU Center for Coastal Systems and Informatics.

Robert Howard, a geological sciences student who studies stormwater runoff, and Christopher Betancourt, a biology student studying models of sea level rising, will become RENCI's modeling masters fellows for the Fall 2009 semester. The fellowships will support the students' thesis work.

The students will have use of RENCI's state-of-the-art facilities and receive a $4,500 stipend. Their advisors will also receive a $500 stipend.

Cell phone drive planned

The Student Legal Services Department will hold the first of a series of used cell phone drives from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday at Wright Plaza.

All phones collected will be given to the Family Violence Center of Pitt County. Other collections dates are: June 25, July 30, Aug. 27, Sept. 24 and Oct. 29. Contact Dawn Gibbs at 737-1067 or gibbsm@ecu.edu for more information.
ECU students earn drafter certification

Twenty-nine East Carolina University students earned their American Design Drafting Association (ADDA) drafter certification-mechanical in May.

The students are all pursuing bachelor's of science degrees in design with a concentration in architectural technology, mechanical technology or bachelor of science degrees in industrial engineering technology from the Department of Technology Systems.

The bachelor's degree in design is a National Association of Industrial Technology (NAIT) accredited program, and East Carolina University is an ADDA authorized testing site.

The students earning the ADDA certification were Katherine Aubin, Lindsey Michelle Austin, Craig Baron, Ryan Benner, Daniela Berro, Kyle C. Byrne, Jeffrey Neal Davis, Marcus Dill, Jonathan Weston Edwards, Jared Matthew Floyd, Bryan Edward Gerganous, Christopher Gyori, Meredith L. Harris, Dion R. Jenkins, Ahmed Kar, Felix Salomon Martinez II, Jeremy Gray Mc Kee, Joseph Petillo, Tyler Michael Priest, Tyler William Rose, Travis W. Roundtree, Jacek T. Rykala, Edgar Sven Santos, John Warren Sweitzer, Jesse Lovick Taylor IV, Meredith Walker, Rochelle M. Williams, Brandon Winslow, Chris Wright.

Drafter certification is an international program that allows drafters to demonstrate their knowledge in drafting concepts and internationally recognized standards and practices. The American Design Drafting Association developed the examination to elevate an individual's comprehension of the professional standards related to design drafting.

Certification enables drafters to demonstrate professional capabilities and helps employers identify quality employees. The test does not cover software specific to computer-aided drafting or design. The ADDA drafter certification examination is open to all individuals, regardless of experience and formal education. Membership in ADDA is not required to take the test or become certified.

According to the American Design Drafting Association, becoming a certified drafter reflects one's proven knowledge of drafting. Certification enhances one's credibility as a professional, improves their opportunities for promotion and pay increases, and gives them a competitive edge in a highly technical job market.

When employers hire an ADDA-certified drafter, they know that the new employee meets certification criteria and that they have demonstrated initiative and pride in the profession by becoming certified, a news release said. Thus, certification can serve as one criterion for differentiating among candidates in the selection process.

Certification serves educators as a supplementary measurement of a student's performance on a recognized national level.
City sees rash of crimes since April 30

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

Handguns played a role in all but three of a rash of robberies that have hit Greenville since late April, police department reports show.

Officers have been utilizing a new area policing plan to confront the outbreak of robberies and armed assaults during the past month. So far, two incidents have ended in arrests among 16 incidents tracked by The Daily Reflector since April 30, when five robberies occurred in a single night. An investigation into one strong-arm robbery was classified as inactive after leads were exhausted.

Some of the crimes share common characteristics, and investigators have surveillance photos to go with eyewitness reports in some instances.

The most common thread is the use of handguns, according to an analysis by The Daily Reflector. Guns were used in 13 of the crimes; a BB pistol was used in another.

One victim was shot, shots were fired in another incident, and robbers in several cases pointed the weapons at their victims. In a May 1 incident on Dickinson Avenue, a robber pulled the trigger but the weapon did not fire. In a May 15 incident that started on 11th Street, robbers turned their weapon toward the heads of two ECU students.

At least three incidents involved victims identified as East Carolina University students, in two cases moving to or from entertainment venues around the downtown area near the campus.

Eleven of the 16 incidents occurred in areas near campus largely populated or frequented by East Carolina students, including the Tar River neighborhood and neighborhoods in the area south of 10th Street near Charles Boulevard and Dickinson.

Just last Sunday, two ECU students were robbed at gunpoint at 1008 Dickinson Ave., outside the Great American Mining Co. last Sunday.

Eleven of the incidents occurred in the 700 and 3000 blocks of South Memorial Drive. All of the incidents occurred between the hours of 10 p.m. and 3 a.m. No one has been killed during the surge, though detectives are currently without leads in their search for the killer of nightclub owner Shawn “Mack” Williamson, who was shot at his home in March.

Violent crime is not new to Greenville and other growing communities, Chief William Anderson said last month when he discussed the new area policing plan.

The plan was designed to narrow the scope of immediate responsibility for each area commander and increase the accountability each has for achieving positive results, Anderson said.

It is an integral part of the department’s community policing policy, which tries to establish close ties among the officers and residents of Greenville, he said.

One benefit of closer communications, Anderson said, is the sharing of information about crimes and suspects that can lead to arrests and safer neighborhoods.

“The responsibility for safer neighborhoods and crime prevention is a shared one between government and the people,” Anderson said last month. “The police will never be able to rid the city of crime by themselves.”

Outlets such as Neighborhood Watch and CrimeStoppers are tools that protect those who wish to be active partners in neighborhood safety, Anderson said.

The chief has expressed his confidence that his plan will catch active criminals and prevent future ones.

Michael Abramowitz can be contacted at mabr@coxnc.com and 329-9571.

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open: along sidewalks, in the street or in parking lots. Two of them occurred at businesses and three at or near apartments.

Business between the 700 and 3000 blocks of South Memorial Drive were targeted four times, including the May 4 robbery of Wilco-Hess store, where a gunman dressed in a black mask and black hooded sweatshirt fired two shots before leaving with cash.

Wednesday, April 30, saw the most incidents in the time span analyzed by the Reflector, with five robberies in a single night. Robbers struck once on Wednesday May 14, five times on Thursday nights, three times on Sunday nights and once each on Friday and Saturday.
A shift from Eastern North Carolina

TED VADEN, Staff Writer

A signal moment in The News & Observer's history passed quietly this month. Jerry Allegood, Eastern North Carolina correspondent for the last 35 years, took retirement. With Allegood's departure, the Greenville bureau was closed, leaving the paper without a correspondent based "Down East."

Those events follow other recent changes in the Eastern North Carolina coverage. The paper no longer has a state reporter assigned to cover news outside the Triangle, and an editing position assigned to state news is unfilled.

While The N&O still has substantial circulation in Eastern North Carolina, the larger significance of the changes is that The N&O is no longer the state newspaper that it once was.

The changes result from shifting market realities and the tightening financial condition of the newspaper. While growth in Eastern North Carolina is slow to nonexistent -- with the exception of coastal resorts and Greenville -- the Triangle area is booming. In response, the paper is shifting its resources to the core market. At the same time, the paper has reduced news staffing through attrition and, more recently, buyouts.

John Drescher, executive editor, says The N&O will continue to cover stories in Eastern North Carolina, but with reporters assigned out of Raleigh. "There are still good stories there. We have significant circulation there. We have the historical ties to the region. The people of Eastern North Carolina mean a lot to us, and I think The News & Observer means a lot to them. But the bottom line is I only have a certain number of jobs."

The recent changes have accelerated a longer-term trend of withdrawal from the eastern region. At one time, The N&O provided home delivery in 50 of the state's 100 counties. There were three news bureaus: in Fayetteville, Greenville and Jacksonville. Circulation outside the Triangle reputedly was 40 percent of the N&O's total distribution.

That began to change in 1984, when The N&O cut back home delivery to 25 counties to eliminate unprofitable circulation. As local papers in the east improved -- Greenville, Rocky Mount, Wilson, New Bern, Kinston -- the trend accelerated.

In 1980, The N&O had daily circulation of 55,529 in eastern counties. Today, that's down to 21,881. But the loss has been more than made up in Wake, Durham and Orange counties, where combined circulation has gone from 56,132 to 118,648. The N&O's total average circulation this year is 172,029 daily, 210,185 Sunday.

Jim Puryear, The N&O's circulation vice president, says the numbers reflect a deliberate shift in sales effort from the east to the Triangle, where circulation profit is higher and advertisers value the readership more. "It makes more sense to put your effort in Wake County than in Chocowinity," he said.

Puryear said he's not concerned about the effect on circulation of closing the Greenville bureau. But people in Greenville are upset.

"A disaster of epic proportions" is how John Durham, executive director of communications at East Carolina University, described Allegood's departure. "The people I have talked to are disappointed that The N&O has made the decision to close the bureau. The N&O is widely read and respected in Greenville and this part of the state, and Jerry has been an important part of that. He is an extremely knowledgeable, thoughtful, fair and conscientious reporter of everything from hurricanes to barbecue.

"Without a physical presence, a lot of people are worried that The N&O's continuing coverage of the region is
likely to suffer both in quantity and quality of reporting."

Durham frets also about future coverage of ECU news and sports. The N&O no longer has a sports reporter assigned to East Carolina, which has 13,000 alumni in the Triangle -- same as Duke.

But he pointed out something that makes it likely Easterners won't drop their N&O reading habit completely. People there look to The N&O not so much for coverage of news from the area -- which after all is provided by the local newspapers -- but of the Capitol, state government and politics. As long as The N&O continues to provide that coverage and its trademark watchdog journalism, it still will have value for readers there, he said.

As a longtime N&Oer, and as a friend of Allegood, I hate to see the changes, too. I do think a dropoff is inevitable in the type of important regional stories -- such as the environment, growth and issues like the Navy's controversial outlying landing field -- covered by Allegood. If there's not a watchdog on the premises to sniff, some stories won't come out.

But I have a hard time arguing away the issues -- local growth, declining resources -- that force the change. I asked Drescher whether, despite such factors, The N&O has a public service responsibility to provide the coverage Down East. Yes, he said. "But we have a public service mission in Wake County, too, that we need to do a better job of meeting."

Correction

In this column last week, I wrote that San Antonio, Texas, is on the Mexican border. It is about 130 miles from Mexico.

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Water used to treat palsy

In a UNC study, cerebral palsy patients use aquatic exercise to forestall muscle atrophy.

BY THOMAS GOLDSMITH
STAFF WRITER

A groundbreaking treatment at UNC-Chapel Hill offers adults with cerebral palsy more strength, mobility and hope, researchers say.

As cases of cerebral palsy increase nationally — as many as 350 children are born with it each year in North Carolina — improvements in treatment for adults will be crucial to keeping as many as possible active, independent and employed.

In the trials, adults with cerebral palsy exercise in water, providing more intense workouts and less physical wear.

George Kourtsonis, 31, a Raleigh credit counselor who is participating in the trial, said he puts maximum effort into his 45-minute exercise sessions in a swimming pool three times a week so he can stay strong and mobile. He’s resisting the usual course for cerebral palsy, in which adults can go downhill quickly after they turn 21 and no longer qualify for programs funded by federal and state tax dollars.

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Water is more forgiving

The five-year, $685,000 trial, designed by UNC-CH professor and therapist Deborah Thorpe and funded by the National Institutes of Health, follows adults with cerebral palsy through a 12-week course of intensively monitored exercise in water.

On a recent spring evening, Thorpe greeted three trial participants at a heated pool at the UNC Wellness Center at Meadowmont. Kourtsonis, John Mason and Mihir Shah, along with a student trainer for each, hit the pool equipped with heart monitors.

“We’ve never thought we could work these people with CP at these levels,” Thorpe said. “They’re at the same rate as their typical peers as they work to develop strength.”
Mason, a grocery store employee who has mental retardation, strode quickly through the pool with close attention from Norma Daugherty, a UNC-CH undergraduate studying exercise science. Shah, who works in UNC-CH’s pharmacy school, stepped on and off a 6-inch block submerged at the bottom of the pool.

“He couldn’t do that out of the water,” Thorpe said. “I have people that don’t ever stand or walk standing and walking in the water.”

Like many adults with cerebral palsy, these men are trying to make up for past shortfalls in their conditioning.

“They kind of fall between the cracks,” Thorpe said.

Teenagers with cerebral palsy soon carry a double burden, losing school- and state-supported help just as they start to lose function because of the disease.

Groups such as Easter Seals UCP have many programs aimed at children, but their services for adults focus almost solely on helping them find and keep jobs.

**Use or lose muscles**

Jobs for adults with cerebral palsy are vital for independence and self-image, but employees have to stay in shape to keep them. And these adults have attracted little research or follow-up.

“We have treated kids for years and just assumed that they go off and do just as well when they left treatment,” said Damiano of the national cerebral palsy academy.

“In fact, they do very poorly.” Nearly everyone has problems with mobility as they age, partly because of stress on joints, but it happens much more quickly for adults with cerebral palsy, in a “use it or lose it” pattern that can lead to further problems.

“You can really become deconditioned if you are not getting exercise or physical therapy on a regular basis,” said Kate Cardoza, 25, a recent trial participant and a social worker at UNC Hospitals. “You lose strength and you have increased pain that you really don’t have to if you have intervention on a regular basis.”

Thorpe, the UNC-CH researcher, said she has had to overcome outmoded ideas about cerebral palsy and exercise.

“The old mind set for therapy was if you exercise a spastic muscle, you make it more spastic,” she said. “Everybody thought it was too late for them, but it’s not too late.”

What helps adults with cerebral palsy, researchers said, is a means of exercising intensely without straining already sore joints.

The added buoyancy of water means that someone submerged to the hips is bearing only about 50 percent of his body weight.

People in the trial can move muscles more vigorously than in land-based exercises.

“The key is to keep people stronger so they can do more without being fatigued,” Damiano said. “If I lose half my strength and I am working twice as hard as you to get across the street, I am going to get tired a lot quicker.”

When adults with cerebral palsy lose strength, mobility goes, too. As with older people who have trouble getting around, that can mean losses in work, social interaction and independence.

“I can’t tell you how many adults used to work but can’t work any more,” Thorpe said.

Researchers said the idea of high-intensity, low-resistance exercise with monitoring could easily translate to America’s increasing population of out-of-shape seniors. About one out of four people older than 65 gets no exercise, with resulting increases in conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure.

Just the fact that water is such an easy medium to exercise in should work for an older person, Cardoza said.

“You don’t realize how hard you are working until you see the results,” she said.

However, the drawback for both populations is cost. A key element is the presence of an individual trainer.

“I wanted someone who was going to get in my face and constantly motivate and drive me,” Kourtounis said.

One of the goals of the UNC-CH trial is to look at what happens to participants’ quality of life because of health problems.
State workers deserve decent pay raise

After reading Gov. Mike Easley's budget proposal last week, many of my co-workers at East Carolina University were dismayed at the paltry "supposed" raise that state employees were being offered. It was touted as a 4 percent raise but, in reality, was only a 1.5 percent raise with a $1,000 one-time bonus and an additional five days of bonus vacation time.

Have we not done this before? Many of us still have the bonus vacation days (which amounted to 200 total hours) that were "awarded" to us several years ago. This so-called budget flies in the face of conventional wisdom since the 1.5 percent would probably go to paying taxes on our paychecks, the $1,000 would be taxed at a rate of 29 percent, and the five vacation days will not pay for gas (now at $3.95/gallon), buy groceries or pay bills no matter how you look at it.

So is this really what a raise is supposed to look like? There have been many years where the state employees received nothing, but times were tight, we were patient and tried to be understanding.

This is not to say that the teachers should not get a raise to meet the national average, but 7 percent is quite a lot. In comparison, the rest of the state workers have always gotten far less, but are as dedicated to providing the best, regardless of what our jobs entail.

We are not the obviously visible employees, but as you walk down the street, whether in Raleigh or in your community, we are many. We have jobs in university/community college settings, take care of the sick in the state-run medical centers, work on the roads, protect the environment, police the highways, promote safety among the citizens of North Carolina and the list goes on and on.

We applaud the teachers, but who appreciates the rest of us?

MARTINA CHRISTIE
Winterville
State urges hurricane preparation — now

BY DAVID BRACKEN
STAFF WRITER

With just six days to go before the start of the Atlantic hurricane season, the state’s disaster relief agencies are urging residents to prepare for the worst.

In declaring this week Hurricane Preparedness Week, Gov. Mike Easley said homeowners should review their insurance policies, put together emergency preparedness kits and learn the evacuation routes in their community.

“Our state’s vulnerability to hurricanes ranks second only to Florida, so every citizen must be prepared,” Easley said.

Hurricane prognosticators are calling for anywhere from 13 to 16 named storms to materialize this season, with possibly as many as nine of those storms reaching hurricane strength.

The atmospheric conditions that have spawned increased hurricane activity since 1995 — warmer-than-normal temperatures in the eastern tropical Atlantic — are expected to continue in 2008.

An average season, which runs from June 1 through Nov. 30, has 11 named storms, including six hurricanes, two of which are expected to reach major status.

Last month, researchers at N.C. State University estimated 13 to 15 storms could form in the Atlantic Basin, which includes the entire Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. Between six and eight of those storms could reach hurricane force, said Lian Xie, a professor of marine, earth and atmospheric sciences at N.C. State.

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Xie and his fellow N.C. State researchers were correct in their projections for the total number of storms during the 2007 season, though they overestimated the number that would reach hurricane strength.

There were 15 named storms and six hurricanes, two of which were major, in 2007. Just one hurricane, one tropical storm and three tropical depressions struck the United States.

None of those storms delivered heavy rainfall to the dry Southeast.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released its predictions for 2008 last week, saying there is a 60 to 70 percent chance that between 12 and 16 named storms will form, including six to nine hurricanes and two to five major hurricanes.

A major hurricane is defined as one that reaches Category 3, 4 or 5 — meaning the storm’s winds are at least 111 mph and its storm surge is greater than 6 feet above normal.

The 2005 Atlantic hurricane season, which included Katrina and Rita, was the busiest on record, with 27 named storms and 15 hurricanes.

In recent weeks, state officials have been focusing on 20 coastal counties that could need to be evacuated if a Category 4 or 5 storm comes ashore, as Hurricane Floyd did in 1999.

North Carolina has secured federal Homeland Security money to pay for moving the most vulnerable residents in the event of a disaster.

Experts recommend that any hurricane emergency kit contain enough nonperishable food to last three to five days and a gallon of water per person per day. Other key items include a weather radio and batteries, a first-aid kit, a supply of prescription medicines and cash or a checkbook.

Pet owners also should include all the necessary supplies to feed, house and take care of their animals.

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