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An expansion of Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium is prompting officials to review parking policies on East Carolina University football game days.

More than 75 people attended a community forum on the issue at First Presbyterian Church on Wednesday evening. The forum was hosted by the Greenville Police Department and the Police Community Relations Committee.

“We have had a lot of struggles with parking and the issues that surround it,” Greenville Police Chief William Anderson said. “With the number of people attending the games increasing, it is going to put extra challenges on neighbors surrounding the stadium.”

ECU is adding 7,000 seats to the stadium. The university is planning to boost shuttle parking away from the stadium at the Brody School of Medicine and other spots by promoting those parking areas and making them more attractive to fans with entertainment or other amenities. But the areas around the stadium likely will continue to see problems associated with parking on game days, Anderson said.

Anderson presented three plans to address the issue and took input from the audience.

At the end of the meeting, Anderson asked the audience to vote by placing stickers on three posters listing the options and the rules associated with them.

The first option would be heavily restricted parking around the stadium. Fans would need a parking pass, other vehicles would not be allowed on the streets, and it would be enforced by barricades.

The second option would be to use zero tolerance when enforcing parking and traffic rules that exist in the neighborhoods. It would include a media campaign to let fans know about the zero-tolerance policy and would include new signs or special signs for game days.

Option three would be to continue handling game days as they have been handled.

After gathering audiences suggestions, officials created a fourth option that would be a combination of options two and three. The majority of the audience voted for the fourth option.

Anderson said officials will continue to develop a comprehensive plan for handling traffic in neighborhoods around the stadium. He said there will be more opportunities for the public to provide suggestions before the season begins.

The following suggestions were offered to help ease the burdens of game-day traffic:

Place bags over parking signs that are not going to be enforced;

Paint corners where parking is not allowed;
Take emergency vehicles through streets to make sure they have room and adjust parking rules if they do not;
Parking allowed on only one side of the street for game days;
Increase response time to complaints called in to police;
Fix traffic jam issues around Berkley, Treemont, 14th and Elm streets.
Officials recognize that improving parking conditions on game day will involve changing the culture around football games because many fans park in the same spots for every game each year.
“If we really want to fix it, we have to do something that change the culture,” ECU Athletics Director Terry Holland said.
Holland said that ECU could administer parking around the stadium by painting spaces, selling passes and enforcing the rules. But, he said, nobody really wants to see that.
Anderson said any final plan will include input from the stadium’s neighbors.
“We want to hear from you because you know better than we do what the issues really are,” Anderson said. “There are a lot of quality-of-life issues that this plan may be able to address.”

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Stats show efforts in class
ACC schools, ECU progress

By J.P. Giglio
STAFF WRITER

The Academic Progress Rate reports released by the NCAA on Wednesday offered good news for the in-state ACC schools and East Carolina.

Duke, North Carolina, Wake Forest and N.C. State combined to have 30 teams recognized by the NCAA in the top 10 percent of their sport in APR scores.

The APR tracks the academic progress of each student-athlete on scholarship, accounting for academic eligibility, retention and graduation while attempting to provide a measure of each team’s performance in the classroom.

The NCAA released a four-year score, based on data from 2005-06 through 2008-09, as well as a one-year score for the 2008-09 academic year.

The multi-year APRs of the men’s basketball teams of UNC (995) and N.C. State (990) ranked in the top 10 percent nationally and led the ACC.

Duke had 14 teams with multi-year scores in the top 10

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percent and led the ACC in football (983) and women's basketball (990). UNC had eight teams ranked in the top 10 percent, followed by Wake Forest (five) and N.C. State (three). ECU did not have any.

East Carolina's men's basketball (904) was the only team to fall below the NCAA standard of 925, but the team made enough progress, up from 879 in the previous report, that the Pirates avoided any NCAA penalties.

Syracuse's men's basketball team and Colorado's football team and men's basketball team were not as fortunate.

Colorado will lose one scholarship in men's basketball and up to four in football. The Buffaloes had a score of 897 in basketball and 920 in football. The men's basketball team was coached by new Wake Forest coach Jeff Bzdelik from 2007 to 2010.

Syracuse's basketball team scored 912 and could lose up to two scholarships if academically ineligible Orange players leave school before next season.

Only four teams from Bowl Championship Series schools, other than those at Colorado and Syracuse, face penalties. Those were the men's outdoor track teams at Auburn and Cincinnati, the men's indoor track team at Auburn and the women's rowing team at West Virginia.

Each athlete receives one point per semester for remaining academically eligible and another point each semester for remaining at that school or graduating.

A mathematical formula is then used to calculate a final team score, with 1,000 points being perfect.

Teams falling below 925 can face conditional scholarship losses. Teams consistently falling below 900 can be penalized more harshly.

Material from The Associated Press was used in this report.

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ACADEMIC PROGRESS RATES
DUKE
Football: 983 (90th-100th percentile within sport)
Men's basketball: 960 (80th-90th)
Women's basketball: 990 (80th-90th)

EAST CAROLINA
Football: 941 (40th-50th)
Men's basketball: 904 (10th-20th)
Women's basketball: 959 (30th-40th)

UNC
Football: 957 (60th-70th)
Men's basketball: 995 (90th-100th)
Women's basketball: 979 (60th-70th)

N.C. STATE
Football: 937 (40th-50th)
Men's basketball: 990 (90th-100th)
Women's basketball: 953 (20th-30th)

WAKE FOREST
Football: 966 (70th-80th)
Men's basketball: 959 (60th-70th)
Women's basketball: 986 (70th-80th)
Obesity plan shares N.C. strategy
Blue Cross Blue Shield program focuses on talking to youngsters

BY SARAH AVERY
STAFF WRITER

A childhood obesity program tested by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is being rolled out nationwide by the insurers’ sister companies, the company said Wednesday.

The approach provides doctors with strategies for talking with youngsters about maintaining a healthy weight and getting adequate exercise. It has been used in North Carolina among many of the insurer’s doctors since 2007 as part of a broader effort by the state’s largest insurer to tackle rising obesity rates.

In North Carolina, a third of youngsters are obese or overweight, increasing their risk for developing diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and stroke. Type 2 diabetes, in particular, is often linked to excess weight caused by a fatty, high-calorie diet and too little exercise.

At one time, Type 2 diabetes nearly always occurred later in life. But that has changed. In recent years, Type 2 diabetes has increasingly been diagnosed in children. Nationally, four in 1,000 children have diabetes, and nearly a third of those cases are Type 2, according to an annual health survey.

For an insurer, the mounting health problems associated with obesity are a huge expense. An economic analysis by RTI International put the medical costs...

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OBESITY
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of obesity nationwide at $147 billion a year — much of which includes the hospitalizations, treatments and therapies that insurance companies cover.

The cost to insurers

“When you look at a per member, per month basis, adults who are obese are 32 percent more expensive than a non-obese person,” said Dr. Don Bradley, chief medical officer at BCBSNC. “An overweight person is 16 percent more expensive. When you consider that two-thirds of the population is either overweight or obese, that’s quite a lot.”

To tackle the problem, the insurer helped develop a tool kit for doctors to begin interventions with children and their parents. The approach offers suggestions about healthy diets, regular exercise and less computer, video game and TV time. Specifically, doctors are urged to recommend eating five helpings of fruits and vegetables a day and drinking no beverages with calories, including sweet tea, fruit juices and sodas.

Dr. Edie Bernosky, a pediatrician from Chapel Hill who helped pilot the effort, said the information in the tool kit is easy to understand and helps put the problem in perspective. She said many children and parents are unaware of the serious health consequences of obesity and the likelihood of severe problems occurring earlier in life.

Focus on BMI

The Blue Cross program provides doctors with an accessible definition of the body mass index, for example, to help frame the scope of the problem for children and their parents. The BMI is a measurement of fat in someone’s body, a calculation using weight and height; anything over 25 is considered overweight.

“We’re talking about the BMI as almost a vital sign,” Bernosky said. “When a child’s BMI is really high, parents are aware of cardiovascular disease in adulthood and adult-onset diabetes, but they don’t make that connection of an elevated BMI in childhood leading to the same outcomes.”

She said it’s important to make those connections and to change behaviors early.

“This is a national epidemic, and what we need to do is take measures and strategies from multiple directions,” Bernosky said, noting that healthy foods should be available and affordable and that exercise should be promoted at schools and elsewhere.

“It’s useless to promote these concepts if we don’t reinforce that and make it possible to achieve these goals.”

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Robertson, 67, founder of Duke/UNC-CH program

BY JOSH SHAFFER
STAFF WRITER

Josephine Tucker Robertson, the philanthropist who helped join Duke University with archival UNC-Chapel Hill by co-founding the Robertson Scholars program, died in New York on Tuesday after a long struggle with breast cancer. She was 67.

Born in San Antonio, she and her sister-in-law started Tuckertown, a business that designed and produced Christmas tree ornaments for department stores nationwide. In 1972, she married Salisbury native Julian Robertson, a 1955 UNC-CH graduate who went on to found the hedge fund Tiger Management.

The Robertson Scholars program started in 2000 with a $24 million gift from the couple, inspired by their two sons who graduated from both Duke and UNC-Chapel Hill. The idea was to give students — typically 18 a year from each school — the chance to attend classes on both campuses, riding in buses with logos in dual shades of blue.

Along with tuition (UNC-CH students also get living expenses and a stipend), Robertson scholars are given laptop computers and money for community service research and travel abroad or across the country. If chosen, a Robertson scholar might spend the summer in locations as wide-ranging as Mississippi or South Africa.

This year, the Robertsons donated a Pablo Picasso portrait and three other paintings to the newly expanded N.C. Museum of Art.

Robertson is survived by her husband, three sons, two sisters, two brothers and three grandchildren.

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Medical schools use outreach programs to make student bodies more diverse

By Elizabeth G. Olson
Special to The Washington Post
Tuesday, June 8, 2010; HE01

When D’Onior Felton was growing up in the Mississippi Delta, she thought about becoming a public health worker. She volunteered at a local health center to help the elderly. A few days after graduating from high school in 2000, she joined the Navy and trained as a surgical technician.

Despite her interest in health fields, Felton never considered becoming a doctor. But when the Navy put her to work in an operating room, Felton for the first time imagined herself wearing doctor’s scrubs. "Working side by side with surgeons and being given a large degree of autonomy boosted my confidence," said Felton, 28, who earned an undergraduate degree while in the service.

It took Felton three years to complete all the required pre-med science courses after her military discharge in 2005. But today she’s a medical student at George Washington University. An African American who did not follow the typical pre-med path, Felton is an example of the nontraditional students that medical schools are going after in an effort to diversify the ranks of America’s doctors.

Two years ago, a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association concluded that diversity in medical schools helps prepare doctors for today’s very varied patient population. More than 20,000 graduating students were surveyed for the study; those who had attended more ethnically and racially mixed medical schools saw themselves as better able to interact with a diverse patient pool than those from less mixed schools.

Medical school officials have long said they want a broad range of backgrounds among their students, yet they have had trouble attracting more students from traditionally underrepresented groups. Today, about 7 percent of 77,722 medical students nationwide are African American and about 8 percent are Hispanic, according to the Web site of the Association of American Medical Colleges, which represents the nation’s 132 medical schools. Whites make up almost 61 percent, with Asians accounting for nearly 22 percent. Other traditionally underrepresented groups, including American Indians and Alaska natives, make up about 2 percent.

"The key is the student pipeline, which is so deficient," said Marc Nivet, chief diversity officer for the AAMC.

In 2008, the association issued a "roadmap to diversity" to help medical schools broaden their applicant pools and student bodies while steering clear of potential legal problems. The Supreme Court has restricted the use of race in admissions, allowing it to be considered only as part of much broader education goals.
The Liaison Committee on Medical Education, which accredits medical schools, has also weighed in, saying the schools must make "ongoing, systematic and focused efforts" to attract students from demographically diverse backgrounds. "Because graduates of U.S. and Canadian medical schools may practice anywhere in their respective countries, it is expected that schools recognize their collective responsibility for contributing to the diversity of the profession as a whole," the group's July 2009 policy states. "Each medical school must have policies and practices to achieve appropriate diversity among its students, faculty, staff, and other members of its academic community."

The goal is "to integrate diversity in a broader way," said Barbara Barzansky, secretary of the Liaison Committee.

To do so, some medical schools are targeting students who haven't even begun college. GWU's medical school, for instance, last summer began recruiting underrepresented minorities and disadvantaged students who were graduating from District public and charter high schools for a month of study exposing them to various health-care jobs while helping them prepare to succeed academically.

This summer, 16 graduating seniors, all minorities, will participate in the program's second year, focusing on topics such as basic problem-solving and suturing wounds. They will all have mentors who are studying medicine or public health, among them Felton. (During a recent internship of her own, Felton studied the shortcomings of primary and secondary education for minorities who want to enter health-care professions.)

To qualify for the program, students -- who are called scholars -- must have been accepted to a college. They will receive a $1,000 stipend for participating in the program and $4,800 in scholarship money toward college tuition.

"Our goal is to let them see the kinds of opportunities they can have," said Yolanda Haywood, the GWU physician who heads the program, which is funded in part by the university and in part by the federal government.

Mentors keep in touch with their scholars after the summer program is finished to encourage and counsel them when they hit academic or other bumps in college.

Knowing what to expect in college does not make it easy, said Loren Redman, 18, who attended the program last year and has finished her freshman year at Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park. Redman, who is Hispanic, has wanted to be an emergency medicine doctor since her mother fell into a coma -- from which she has still not emerged -- six years ago. Redman and her 2-year-old daughter live in the District with her grandmother.

"The program opened my eyes to see what medicine is all about," said Redman. "It really motivated me" and provided support through difficult college classes in biology and chemistry.

Equipping students to handle early college-level science courses is one of the aims of the program, said James Scott, dean of GWU's medical school. "We are trying to help students not to have their career dreams destroyed when they hit Chemistry 101."

Scott said it would be even better if schools could work with students in high school to bolster math and science skills: "You could start even earlier. We are fishing in very shallow waters when it comes to preparation."
At Georgetown University School of Medicine, diversity efforts target college graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially those with degrees in science. The school reaches out to those whose record suggests that they would be likely to succeed in medical school, even if they have not followed a traditional pre-med path.

For nearly two dozen of these students, Georgetown offers the year-long Georgetown Experimental Medical Studies program, which gives them a chance to take some first-year medical school classes along with test-skills and study-skills courses.

Eleni Footman, an African American who graduated with a health sciences major from the University of Florida, wanted to go to medical school, but the entrance tests flummoxed her.

"I didn't test well, and that was a problem for me," the 25-year-old Miami native said. She attended the GEMS program last year and survived the intensive testing and quiz-taking programs, in addition to three medical school classes. In the end she won a spot in the medical school, one of 75 GEMS students now enrolled there.

The academic boot camp "was one of the toughest years of my life," she said, but "learning and helping each other as a group was powerful."

Olson is a freelance writer.
Wal-Mart Finds Ally in Education

By MICHELINE MAYNARD

What promises to be a lucrative arrangement between the country’s largest retailer and an education company based in West Virginia started with an unsolicited e-mail message in October.

The retailer, Wal-Mart Stores, was looking for a partner to offer online college courses to its work force in the United States. Might American Public Education — which runs two Web-based universities — be interested?

By January, American Public put together a team devoted to landing the Wal-Mart contract, and last week, the two companies announced an agreement. Wal-Mart committed to spending $50 million over the next three years in tuition and other assistance for employees who enroll.

Since then, shares in the $850 million education company, which started 19 years ago as a provider of classes to military personnel and now offers degrees in 76 fields, have risen 11 percent, and its profile in the for-profit education field has soared.

“It puts them on the map in a way they haven’t been,” said Trace A. Urdan, senior analyst in San Francisco with Signal Hill, an investment bank.

And the partnership, in Wal-Mart’s eyes, could be a tool to improve American competitiveness, American Public’s chief executive, Wallace E. Boston Jr., said on Wednesday at a conference sponsored by UBS in New York.

But the choice of American Public, which has about 70,000 students in 100 countries, was a surprise on a number of fronts, analysts said. The organization is best known for its 45,000 students in a division called American Military University. The operation working with Wal-Mart, American Public University, is dwarfed by competing players.

University of Phoenix, the country’s biggest for-profit school, has nearly a half million
students at 200 locations. By contrast, American Public operates from its headquarters in tiny Charles Town, W.Va., about 75 miles northwest of Washington, with 980 employees and is solely online.

In a telephone interview, Mr. Boston agreed the deal was a game changer for a school that eschews advertising and finds students primarily through word of mouth. “This partnership is getting our brand out there without us having to spend money,” he said.

Richard Garrett, a managing director of Eduventures, a higher education consulting company based in Boston, said the venture was ideal for Wal-Mart’s broad employee base. “No single or even a consortia of brick-and-mortar schools could offer face-to-face facilities” on the scale Wal-Mart required, he said.

Still, the choice of American Public might not sit well with conventional schools, said Jolene L. Knapp, executive director for the Society for College and University Planning, whose members help universities prepare for the future.

“Many in the traditional higher education world will decry this partnership,” she said. “But many, many changes are coming to postsecondary education. This is just one.”

And, she said, the arrangement could wind up transforming American Public as much as it does Wal-Mart, since it will have the opportunity to learn how the retailer operates.

Wal-Mart may be willing to share its knowledge, given that it came to American Public. There was no request for a proposal from the universities it surveyed or any open bidding process, Mr. Boston said.

Instead, Wal-Mart surveyed 81 institutions, including for-profits, nonprofits, online universities, brick-and-mortar colleges, and “even some of the open-source, open-platform online offerings that are out there,” said Alicia Ledlie Brew, senior director of Wal-Mart’s lifelong learning program.

It had several criteria: a program with clear, low pricing (American Public charges $250 a credit hour, a price that has not changed in 10 years, Mr. Boston told the UBS audience); one that was accredited; a college that offered a variety of degrees and course subjects; and one that was used to dealing with adult students.

In a survey of employees, more than two-thirds told Wal-Mart they preferred an online college to a physical one.

Wal-Mart was specifically interested in American Public’s degree program in retail
management, as well as transportation logistics handling, which is among the school’s 10 most popular specialties, Mr. Boston said.

The university is offering students who already work in those areas at Wal-Mart and Sam’s Club credits for real-world experience that will count toward their degrees. Students also are receiving a 15 percent discount in the credit-hour rate. With the credits and discount, a typical cashier would pay $11,700 for an associate degree and $24,000 for a four-year degree.

(Nationally, the average tuition for a four-year degree from a public university is about $28,000, according to the College Board.)

Mr. Boston and his team stressed the organization’s history of offering classes to the nation’s more than one million military personnel. These students are often older than conventional undergraduates, hold jobs and work shifts at various times of day in different time zones.

Ms. Brew said that that background was a deciding factor for Wal-Mart in choosing American Public. Yet analysts have questioned whether it will have the resources to deal with a deluge of new students. “They can recruit counselors and faculty,” Mr. Urdan, the analyst, said. “But when you have to do it at a breakneck pace, it’s something altogether different.”

Both Ms. Brew and Mr. Boston declined to predict how many Wal-Mart employees would choose college classes once they were eligible to sign up.

For one thing, Wal-Mart employees will have to determine how to juggle the demands of online classes with their job and family responsibilities, Mr. Boston said.

“We don’t think this will explode off the start,” he said. “What we think we’ll see is early adopters, and the early adopters who like it will tell others.”

In the meantime, the two companies are still getting acquainted. Mr. Boston said the relationship was going well, but the giant retailer — used to dealing with thousands of suppliers around the world — was still adjusting to the unusual nature of their agreement.

“We had to keep reminding them in a nice way that we weren’t an outsourced provider, we’re a university,” Mr. Boston said.

*Stephanie Clifford contributed reporting.*
All-USA College Academic winners defy expectations

By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY  June 9, 2010
Julie Markham is the kind of person who refuses to give up on a dream — even if some people think it's an impossible dream. And that has made a world of difference to the University of Denver student, who graduated Saturday.
It has taken her to Cambodia, India, Bangladesh, the Middle East and, most recently, Kenya, where she is consulting with a local bank that is developing an eco-friendly village designed to move slum-dwellers into sustainable, affordable housing.

PHOTOS:  Bios and self-portraits of the winning college students
FOR MOBILE:  Text version of bios

Markham, a real estate and finance major, has ignored naysayers who say microfinancing — sometimes called "barefoot banking" — won't lead to long-term social good. Or who think a college student could never play a role in transforming the lives of people across the globe. She heeds the words of Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, who once said: "All progress depends on the unreasonable man."
"No matter where my journey takes me, along the way I hope to be unreasonable," says Markham, 23.
In some ways, that sums up the attitudes of all 20 members of USA TODAY's 2010 All-USA College Academic First Team, which includes Markham. Yes, they study hard, serve their communities and are role models on campus. But at their core, they are solution-oriented thinkers who aren't afraid to dare. And in defying standard notions of what it means to be a student, they set a high bar for what the undergraduate experience looks like.

Georgia Tech physics major William Boyd, 22, for example, didn't just design (as part of a team) a prize-winning bioreactor system that can greatly cut power-plant emissions — he's now president of a company that aims to make the bioreactor a reality for industry. And Elizabeth Longino, 22, who majored in English and public policy at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, is more than a student; this spring, she taught an undergraduate course on the root causes of human trafficking, drawn from her work in Taiwan, Cambodia, Vietnam, South Africa and Bosnia-Herzegovina.
"We're once again impressed by the ambitions and accomplishments of these dedicated students," says Susan Weiss, managing editor of USA TODAY's Life section. "We look forward to seeing great things from them as they move forward in their lives and careers."

Laying the groundwork
Selected by a panel of judges from among hundreds of college juniors and seniors, first-team members receive a $2,500 cash award. Second- and third-team members also were selected, along with honorable mentions.

RUNNERS UP:  Outstanding undergrads named to 2nd, 3rd, honorable mention teams
This year's members are, perhaps more than anything else, true global citizens. James Waters, who studied statistics and economics at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, wrote his thesis on the effects of Nicaragua's Free Trade Zones on education, learned some Japanese for a research trip on World War II and studied Buddhism in Nepal.
Nora Tobin, 21, who majored in political science and international studies at Iowa State University-Ames, has gone sky diving over Cape Town, South Africa, snorkeled with wild dolphins in the Indian Ocean, and chaperoned a service trip to Uganda to build revenue-generating guesthouses and cross-cultural understanding. "I want to be the kind of person who leaves each place I live a better place than I found it," she says.
Those kinds of experiences didn't just land in their laps. Once in a while, luck played a role, but for the most part, the students laid the groundwork.
"Success and happiness are built, not given," says Reynaldo Fuentes, 22, a University of Wyoming political science graduate who has been active in inspiring students to promote social justice, sustainability and diversity.
"You have to make opportunities for yourself," agrees Jennifer Lamb, 21, a Virginia Tech graduate whose academic interest in agriculture, economics and political science opened the door for internships on Capitol Hill and research on soybean processing in Kenya.

Neha Deshpande, 20, a biology major at Johns Hopkins University whose academic interests center on maternal and neonatal health, offers another important consideration for students with high aspirations. "Do things because you care, not for your résumé or to stand out or look good," she says. "Above all else, it should be your passion that shines through, and then everything else will follow."

Easy to say in hindsight, perhaps. But how do you find your passion? The word pops up often when these achievers talk about their lives.

For Middle Tennessee State University journalism graduate Jasmine Gray, 21, passion was born of personal experience. Gray, who has had 29 surgeries over the years to treat a circulatory defect in her face, has collected more than 3,000 pairs of new pajamas since 2006 for kids who, like her, have had extended stays in a hospital. Founded as Jaz's Jammies, the non-profit "represents service, empowerment and love," says Gray, who wants to inspire and empower others someday by starting a media company that examines issues of identity and self-worth, particularly among young people of color and women.

Harvard social studies major and ROTC member Christopher Higgins, 22, stumbled onto his passion in 2007 while interning at New Hope, an orphanage in Uganda. He had figured he would teach English for a couple of months while on break from school, then head back home. But within a few weeks, he was helping the staff develop fundraising and management strategies. He has since raised more than $120,000 for the orphanage and helped the staff develop several projects that are now making a small profit. With Ugandan university students, he has been researching the effect of poverty on child welfare in the community. He hopes to pursue a career in economic development in Asia and Africa after he completes his military service.

As they have in past years, this year's winners may sound, to some, too good to be true. Not so, they insist. Lamb, an equestrian, says she bites her nails but blames the habit on her riding — then admits Denny and her other horses "can really only be blamed for so much." A frightening encounter with a black bear in the Smoky Mountains a few years ago led Boyd to scuttle plans to hike the 2,200 miles of the Appalachian Trail. He now calls that an "overreaction" and intends to hike it next year.

Several members, including Reynaldo and Higgins, acknowledge that they are not terribly tidy, to put it euphemistically. Arizona State University biochemistry major Joshua Niska, 22, who has conducted research on brain and breast cancer and will enroll this fall at Harvard Medical School, says his roommates were "more than accommodating" in dealing with the "stacks of papers lining the dinner table, coffee table and, really, any other flat open space in my living room."

A blessing in disguise

And they have had their moments of despair.

Two summers ago, Joe Johnson, who graduated in May from Loyola University in Chicago with a degree in finance, had been counting on an internship at a top trading firm. But the interview was a flop, and he was subsequently passed over for a different investment-related job. Then, he learned he'd even been rejected for a summer position at a local park district.

"In about a month, I had gone from expecting to make $20,000 to being unable to even mow lawns," Johnson recalls.

But he had planted a seed, however unwittingly, as a teenager when he did office work for a neighbor's company. The boss called again that summer in need of more help. That is what led to an internship analyzing the cost-effectiveness of what is sometimes referred to as cow power: the conversion of animal waste into energy at dairy farms. It opened his eyes and changed the direction of his career.

"Environmental sustainability is my generation's opportunity to change the world," Johnson says. "Turns out, getting rejected at all of these places was the best thing that ever happened to me."