THE DAILY CLIPS

June 18, 2009

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal
USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
Newsweek
U.S. News & World Report
Business Week
Time

East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@.ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252- 328-6300
Camp puts focus on science

The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, June 17, 2009

Pitt County middle school students learned more about health career opportunities Wednesday during the third day of Camp Focus, a two-week event aimed at cultivating passion for science.

Pitt County Schools partnered with DSM and the Eastern Area Education Center to provide the health fair, which included representatives of Pitt Community College, Pitt County Memorial Hospital, East Carolina University and the Brody School of Medicine. It is being held at Wellcome Middle School.

Rising seventh-graders attending this year’s camp traveled through stations offering hands-on lessons about nursing, speech therapy, respiratory therapy, cardiovascular fitness and more.

Rick Wilkerson, science and health coordinator for Pitt County Schools, said each of the stations are related to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and intended to give students a “leg up” on the material they will be learning next school year.

Eighth-graders attending the camp participated in activities involving microbes during the health fair.

In its seventh year, Camp Focus is designed to encourage curiosity and increase the desire of students to learn more about science, Wilkerson said.

About 60 students are participating in this year’s camp.

Other activities will include field trips to DSM, River Park North and the Pitt County Agriculture Center along with roller-coaster and rocket building.

The camp runs through June 25.

Copyright 2009 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved. - -
ECU's Wood turns as diamond in the desert

By Nathan Summers  
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, June 17, 2009

Just a couple of weeks removed from his final college baseball game at East Carolina, Ryan Wood is sweating it out in the Arizona desert this week, waving a wooden bat and trying to make baseball his one and only job.

Wood has been hammering through scrimmages and practices since last week at a team mini-camp in preparation for his first minor league assignment. The former ECU standout second baseman was selected in the 11th round of the amateur draft last week by the Kansas City Royals, and although the Royals selected him as a pitcher, Wood has headed to the desert as a shortstop.

"Long, hot days," is how Wood characterized his week so far, but the Woodbridge, Va., native said he is loving the opportunity to prove himself as a pro player. "I've been out here practicing and scrummaging since Saturday. The practice is kind of tedious stuff, but just the scrimmages have been great, and it's been fun so far. I've been hitting every day and I played in the first game."

The man who left ECU as the club's all-time leader in walks hopes he can maintain some of that batter's box poise at a much higher level. Wood will finish out his week in Arizona before returning to North Carolina to play for Low-A Burlington in the short-season Appalachian League.

That assignment means Wood will embark on his pro career close to family, friends and familiar turf.

The Low-A Royals open their season June 23 at Princeton, and Wood said he'll report to the club on Friday.

First, he'll spend one more long, hot day in the desert. When he gets to North Carolina again, Wood said he is excited to progress as a shortstop.

"I actually feel more comfortable over there," said Wood, who led the Pirates with a .379 batting average as a senior, of moving over to short. "It will all come down to consistency, but that's how it is at all levels of baseball. You've got to have a consistent approach at the plate and be consistent in the field."

Wood belted 14 home runs, hit 22 doubles and amassed 57 RBIs for the Pirates in 2009. He was named All-American by Ping!Baseball (first team), Baseball America (third team), the National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association (second team) and Louisville Slugger/Collegiate Baseball (third team).

Cape escape

As usual, the flood of college players to the Cape Cod Baseball League for summer wood bat experience has carried a handful of ECU mainstays north.

Freshman All-American pitcher Kevin Brandt has caught on with the Hyannis Mets, and is joined by ECU sophomore shortstop Dustin Harrington and sophomore center fielder Trent Whitehead. The Bourne Braves boast ECU junior designated hitter Kyle Roller and sophomore right-handed pitcher Seth Maness.

On the Plain

Playing closer to home in the Coastal Plain League are freshman pitchers Lance Honeycutt and Mike Wright, both of whom are stationed with the Asheboro Copperheads. Junior infielder Broc Sutton is with the Edenton Steamers, while freshman outfielder Philip Clark is with the Outer Banks Daredevils.

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@coxnc.com or (252)329-9595.
Easley was criticized over lease change.

Feds sniff at marina deal

Grand jury looks into renovations

BY J. ANDREW CURLISS, Staff Writer

A wide-ranging federal investigation of former Gov. Mike Easley appears to be venturing into renovations of his Southport house and a marina lease that resulted in an ethics complaint against him.

Several people tied to the marina deal appeared Wednesday at the federal courthouse in Raleigh, where a grand jury was meeting.

Among them was Carl Stewart Jr., a former state House speaker and the current chairman of the state Ports Authority, which oversees the marina. Stewart said in an interview late Wednesday that he spent about 30 minutes with the grand jury, answering questions mostly about the marina deal, which was finalized in late 2005 and early 2006.

The lease deal gave long-term control of the state-owned Southport marina to a group backed by Jim Goodnight and John Sall, founders of Cary’s SAS business software firm, and it led to major improvements of the dilapidated marina. Critics had said the deal was too favorable to campaign supporters of the governor.

"The questions seemed to be appropriate about the decisions that were made," said Stewart, who was appointed by Easley.

Records show that Easley aides worked to shift control of the marina to new owners as Easley’s second term began. Stewart said he does not believe anything illegal took place. He said scores of documents about the deal will be turned over as soon as today.
Residents of Southport fought Easley on the marina deal, saying he was pushing the 430-slip marina to his friends.

Records showed that the management group included Wilmington developer Nick Garrett and Cary developers Julian "Bubba" Rawl and Tim Smith, who along with Goodnight and Sall had donated to Easley's campaigns. Easley denied any improper action, and the ethics complaint was dismissed.

Ports officials had said the marina was in bad shape and needed many repairs. They said a long-term lease with those people would lead to improvements.

Garrett was also at the courthouse in Raleigh on Wednesday, according to an assistant at his office. He performed a renovation on Easley's Southport home beginning in June 2001, about six months after Easley took office. A check later provided by the Governor's Office showed that Easley wrote a check to Nick Garrett Construction Inc. in the amount of $200,000 on March 5, 2002.

Officials have said Garrett dropped out of the marina deal just before it was approved.

Rawl said in an interview that the company now operating the marina has also been contacted by federal agents.

Easley, who could not be reached, has previously said he welcomes any investigation of his many years in public service. Easley, a Democrat, was governor from 2001 until January.

A list of subpoenas

Investigators will not comment on what they are probing, but they have issued subpoenas to several state agencies and others seeking information about issues related to Easley that include his family's use of cars, a job created for his wife at N.C. State University, and a coastal land deal in which the governor and Mary Easley acquired a waterfront lot.

Until now, though, it was not clear that authorities were also interested in the marina deal, which generated lots of chatter in Easley's hometown when it appeared that the state ports authority was about to sell the state-owned marina to private developers in 2005.

Records released in recent months to The News & Observer include documentation of a private lunch that Easley had with Garrett in June 2004 at his Wilmington office. Garrett, who also had been awarded a motor vehicle tag office and was appointed to two state boards by Easley, could not be reached. The next night, Easley attended an event at Goodnight's house in Cary, records show.

E-mails provided to the grand jury by N.C. State also include a mention of Easley seeking help from the university's chancellor for Rawl's son, Jordy, in early 2005. Rawl said in an interview that the governor had written a recommendation letter to help his son get into a program at NCSU that provides academic support for freshmen.

A friend of the governor and university trustee, McQueen Campbell, thanked Chancellor James Oblinger in April 2005 for helping Jordy Rawl.

By the end of that year, Easley was taking criticism from his neighbors in Southport over the efforts to sell the marina.

Eventually, ports officials negotiated a long-term lease with a company led by Rawl and Smith, who have completed many other projects with financial backing of the SAS founders.

The marina company made improvements valued at more than $2.5 million to the marina. The lease is for up to 40 years. The state gets $160,000 a year from the marina company.

acurliss@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4840
Perdue says state needs $1.5 billion in new taxes

BY ROB CHRISTENSEN AND MARK JOHNSON, STAFF WRITERS

RALEIGH - Gov. Beverly Perdue on Wednesday began a campaign for as much as $1.5 billion in tax increases to stave off what she said would be crippling budget cuts for public schools.

At a rally in the Capitol, Perdue, a Democrat, urged the legislature to raise taxes higher than the $780 million proposed in the House budget. Although she declined to say publicly what she would support, the governor privately told lawmakers that between $1 billion and $1.5 billion in new revenues should be generated -- as much as twice the amount of the House plan.

"In North Carolina we have to act boldly to protect our classrooms," Perdue said in the first of a series of six rallies she plans across the state. "I don't believe we can cripple education in this state."

Perdue said revenue should be raised so that the state would not have to lay off teachers or enlarge class sizes.

The governor stopped short of saying what additional taxes she would propose. Aides noted that she had previously called for increases in taxes of cigarettes, beer, wine and alcohol.

The governor held meetings this week with leaders of the Democratic-controlled legislature, including an unusual trip to the Legislative Office Building on Wednesday morning.

But initial evidence suggested that such a large tax hike would be a tough sell, even among her political allies.

"We all gasped," said Sen. Linda Garrou, a Winston-Salem Democrat and appropriations co-chair.

"The more I look at the numbers," Garrou said, "the harder this job is going to be."

It's a risky move to propose large tax increases in bad economic times when many people
are suffering layoffs, salary cuts and furloughs.

Republicans quickly criticized the move, calling it "job destroying" and "irresponsible."

"As North Carolina faces the most dire economic recession in decades, including double digit unemployment rates, Governor Perdue refuses to abandon the tax-and-spend policies that have brought us to this point," said state Senate Republican leader Phil Berger of Eden.

Garrou said Perdue's proposal will be considered, but she added, "we have to look hard at cuts and increasing class size."

"We sort of rolled our eyes and took a deep breath," said Sen. David Hoyle, a Gaston County Democrat and co-chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, who attended one meeting.

Hoyle cautioned, though, that Perdue's figure is not farfetched. A tax plan that he and other Democratic senators are drafting would raise nearly $1 billion next year and $1.4 billion the following year by lowering the sales, income and corporate rates but expanding the sales tax to include some services not currently taxed.

Perdue said the state faces a $4.7 billion shortfall out of a $21 billion budget, one of the worst deficits in the nation. She said most of the gap will be closed by deep budget cuts.

More than 150 people crowded into the old House Chambers to cheer Perdue, mainly members of the N.C. Association of Educators, the influential teachers lobby. Some held signs with slogans such as, "Please don't cut our teachers."

Pay cuts cost support

Perdue launched the statewide tour at a time when her polling numbers have dropped significantly, including among teachers and state employees who strongly supported her election last November. Perdue lost a lot of support when she announced in April that state employees would take a half-percent pay cut.

Just 30 percent of voters say Perdue is doing a good job, while 54 percent disapprove and 17 percent are unsure, according to a survey by Public Policy Polling, a Democratic-leaning polling firm based in Raleigh.

The survey of 784 North Carolina voters was conducted June 12-14.

The survey's margin of error is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

A month ago, Perdue's approval rating was 34 percent

"She needs to do something to make Democrats happy with her," said Tom Jensen of Public Policy Polling. "This is something she can point to her base and say she is doing something for them and making their priorities her priorities."

Perdue cast her move in historic terms, not political ones. She said North Carolina’s reputation as a progressive state rested on its efforts to improve education, moving the state from one of the poorest in the 1950s to a major economic player today.

She evoked the names of past Tar Heel governors, such as Terry Sanford and Jim Hunt in emphasizing educational improvements.

"Education," Perdue said, "year after year has been the engine that has moved us forward."

rob.christensen@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4532

Get it all with convenient home delivery of The News & Observer.
Democrats gasp; Republicans decry 'irresponsible' measures

**By the numbers**

$4.7$ BILLION: Estimated state budget deficit for the coming fiscal year
$1$ BILLION-$1.5$ BILLION: Gov. Beverly Perdue's suggested tax increases
$18.6$ BILLION: Proposed House budget (not including federal stimulus)
$780$ MILLION: Tax increases approved by the House
$30$ PERCENT: Voters in a recent poll who approve of the job Perdue is doing

© Copyright 2009, The News & Observer Publishing Company

A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company
Chins up, please, at N.C. State

BY JIM JENKINS, Staff Writer

Jim Oblinger used to carry some N.C. State University lapel pins in his pocket. When he would meet someone at one of the multitude of events a chancellor has to attend, he would offer them a pin after he'd gotten to know them a little bit. Now, though it's true that The News & Observer over many years has published on this page far more editorials and columns praising N.C. State than those pieces that have been critical, the fact is that some on the campus staff and many alums believe their university hasn't gotten its due and aren't too crazy about The Old Reliable.

I don't happen to agree with their logic, but so be it. In any case, despite a couple of sideways glances from others at the time, Oblinger once gave me with one of his pins.

The occasion was an unveiling of a bronze bust of William Friday, former president of the University of North Carolina system, at a luncheon event on campus. All of the NCSU leaders were there, along with prominent politicians and trustees and statewide leaders.

Oblinger made a very touching talk about Friday, even got a little bit choked up as I recall, in talking about Friday's construction of the UNC system and his support for N.C. State, of which he happens to be a graduate. The chancellor was utterly sincere and genuinely appreciative of the former president's counsel, and also talked about Friday's famed ability to connect with students.

I told Oblinger afterwards that I enjoyed his speech and that I'd taken 16 or 18 hours at N.C. State myself, in summer school, searching for a couple of science courses I could apply to pursuing a degree in Chapel Hill. I also introduced him to an NCSU alum and friend of mine who graduated Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude, and he reached in his pocket and put a pin on her lapel.

Then, he said, "If I give you one of these, will you wear it?" I told him I would, and "proudly."

Today, as N.C. State confronts and copes with a difficult moment in its history, it's important to acknowledge what went wrong in what is now known as the Easley experience. But it's also important to elevate some chins and continue to stand behind all that is right with this great university.

Jim Oblinger, who has served the school in various capacities for over 20 years, has been in those years an example of what was right. He is a modest fellow, gracious, perceptive, given to good humor and devoted to the cause of students, whether that means ensuring the quality of doctoral programs many of us can't even pronounce or chatting it up with a potential new undergrad fresh off the farm or out of the small town.

That's more than a little important, because this is a campus to which NASA looks for research, and where farmers from Martin County in the east to Cherokee County in the west look for advice on their crops. The vet school performs groundbreaking procedures on the
largest animals and cares for the beloved kitty-cats of worried owners. N.C. State is teaching
English to liberal arts majors and the most complicated equations to graduate students as it
develops the latest in fire-retardant suits for public safety officers.

And still it manages to keep faith with individuals.

A friend of mine from a small town remembers applying to colleges during his high school
senior year, and either being quickly dismissed or skeptically received in a few places. Then
his travels took him to an NCSU admissions officer. They had a fairly lengthy conversation,
after which the officer asked him if he was determined to succeed. He said he was, and the
admissions person said, "We'll give you a chance, then." He was accepted, and graduated
with honors.

The state's largest public university reaches out to thousands of North Carolinians through its
extension services, through continuing education programs and in many other ways. Certainly
its presence contributes greatly to life here in the Capital City.

This is a tough time. But N.C. State will overcome.

I've still got my pin, and am still wearing it ... proudly.

Deputy editorial page editor Jim Jenkins can be reached at 829-4513 or at
jjenkins@newsobserver.com

Get it all with convenient home delivery of The News & Observer.

© Copyright 2009, The News & Observer Publishing Company

A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company
Oblinger meets grand jury

The former NCSU chancellor testifies after resigning due to controversy over a position created for Mary Easley.

From staff reports

It was not a typical sight outside the federal courthouse: a recently resigned university chancellor arriving to give testimony to a grand jury.

But that’s where former N.C. State Chancellor James Oblinger was Wednesday morning. Oblinger, who quit last week, was subpoenaed to testify.

Investigators also subpoenaed documents about the job he created in 2005 for former first lady Mary Easley and a raise he helped her get in 2008.

Oblinger declined to comment as he left the federal courthouse in Raleigh just after noon. But his lawyer said Oblinger answered the panel’s questions.

"What I can tell you is that Doctor Oblinger from the start through now has cooperated with this investigation in every way, that he answered all the questions that were put to him this morning by the grand jury," said Press Millen, Oblinger’s attorney. Grand jury sessions are secret.

Federal investigators are looking into several aspects of Mike Easley’s tenure as governor.

Until recently, N.C. State leaders, including Oblinger, had maintained that the job was created solely by Larry Nielsen, who was interim provost at the time. Nielsen became the permanent provost after Mary Easley was hired; he resigned last month, citing the stress of media reports about her job.

Oblinger resigned last week after e-mails and other documents showed that he had been instrumental in creating the job for Mary Easley in 2005 and in orchestrating an 88 percent
raise for her last year. He communicated with McQueen Campbell, an Easley supporter and pilot whom Gov. Mike Easley appointed to the N.C. State Board of Trustees.

Campbell quit his position on the board of trustees after acknowledging that he played a role in getting Mary Easley hired. Oblinger quit after insisting for several weeks that he didn't remember Campbell contacting him and saying he didn't remember passing any information along to Nielsen.

More than 1,000 pages of documents that surfaced last week show that Nielsen, Oblinger and Campbell worked together to create the job. After the governor's budget adviser, Dan Gerlach, made the first contact, the trio worked to satisfy Easley's desires for his wife's work.

Mary Easley had refused to resign, but she was fired last week by the N.C. State Board of Trustees.

All rights reserved. This copyrighted material may not be published, broadcast or redistributed in any manner.

Get it all with convenient home delivery of The News & Observer.

© Copyright 2009, The News & Observer Publishing Company

A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company