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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481
Editorial: With census figures come challenges for county officials
Thursday, June 24, 2010

If the numbers relayed to the Board of Commissioners on Monday prove accurate, then Pitt County has a problem, one that should make it the envy of eastern North Carolina. Early figures from the 2010 Census show a population increase of about 19 percent since the previous count a decade before, exciting news at a time of transition throughout the region.

The challenge, however, is managing that growth, a task that has traditionally foiled elected officials who fail to keep their vision fixed on the long term when making decisions. This population influx reaffirms their need to look toward the future when planning for an area that should expect to see those trends continue in the coming years.

With the 2010 Census nearing its conclusion and the tallies on their way to completion, a specialist with the census effort addressed the county commission on Monday to provide preliminary estimates. Though the official numbers will not be released until March 2011, the figures presented this week show Pitt County’s population at 159,057, which would represent a 19 percent increase over the decade.

To provide perspective, the 1990 Census reported the county had 107,924 residents. The count in 1999 pegged the county’s population at 133,702, representing a 24 percent growth over the decade. That Pitt County was able to almost sustain that growth figure over another 10 years is remarkable, particularly given the economic struggles of eastern North Carolina and the changing nature of the state.

This community is incredibly fortunate to have a number of factors that help fuel that growth. Pitt Community College and East Carolina University make this a hub of education. It is a center for commerce, employing thousands of residents and thousands more in neighboring counties. And it is a destination for entertainment, with restaurants, theater and other events to enjoy.

That said, sustaining that growth is not assured and the decisions made by those in elected office have wide ranging effect. Proper funding for law enforcement, schools, emergency responders and social services are critical, as is the need for thoughtful planning as development devours available space. The county cannot afford to be reactive to these issues, and commissioners are expected to lead with vision in these areas of public concern.

If the numbers hold, the census will represent a significant achievement for Pitt County and reflection of success. This remains a strong and vibrant community, but protecting it and preparing it for the future requires effort still.
ECU football season ticket sales surpass 20,000
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, June 23, 2010

East Carolina football is cashing in on four years of unprecedented success, and nowhere is that more evident than at ECU’s athletic ticket office.
It has been another record-breaking summer for the Pirates in terms of football ticket sales, which have exceeded 20,000 for the fourth consecutive year, not surprisingly in conjunction with ECU’s four straight winning seasons. With the stadium having grown 7,000 new seats in offseason, the big numbers could be bigger than ever by the time the Pirates kick off against Tulsa Sept. 5 with new head coach Ruffin McNeill.
“I think expanding has helped, and people are excited about being in the stadium that first year after expansion and that’s part of it,” ECU assistant athletic director for tickets and marketing Scott Wetherbee said of the school’s burgeoning football ticket sales. “I think having coach McNeill coming with the new offense brings a lot of excitement, and back-to-back championships, people are still excited about that.”
The stadium capacity will now exceed 50,000, and in the era of potential major conference expansion, it makes ECU even more marketable to bigger conferences.
Wetherbee said the stadium is re-seated usually every five years, and this is the fifth year. That means season ticket holders must re-stake their claims on their favorite seats.

“Now is the time for people to buy their season tickets and lock in their seats,” Wetherbee said, noting future home clashes with North Carolina, Virginia Tech and South Carolina.

ECU has set program attendance standards its last three seasons. The Pirates drew a total of 249,219 fans in 2007 before setting consecutive regular season average records with league-best 42,016 and 43,191 marks in 2008 and 2009, respectively. The increases have been a reflection of season ticket success at the box office in the last four years, following a then-record of 16,258 in 2006 with a 22,000 sell-out number in 2007, a 21,160 total in 2008 and a 21,293 figure last fall.

East Carolina enjoyed sellout crowds for all six regular season contests a year ago, standing 14th among all FBS programs with a 100.44 capacity percentage.

In addition to topping all Conference USA members in attendance average for the past two championship-winning campaigns, the Pirates also stood third nationally among all Bowl Championship Series non-automatic qualifiers in 2009, trailing only BYU (64,236) and Utah (45,155).

With a little more than two months to go until its opener, ECU is currently 800 tickets ahead of its 2009 rate according to year-to-date comparisons.

A limited number of chairback seats are available on the North Side for Purple Pirate ($1,200) members and above, while lower level Economy Plan and priority season tickets can still be purchased by Pirate Club members as well as upper deck seating by the general public. East Carolina’s popular Young Graduate plan (2008-2010 grads) enrollees are eligible to buy season ticket packages beginning at $150 each. Single home and away game tickets are now on sale for Pirate Club members only, while the general public individual game ticket sales date has been set for Aug. 9, based on availability.

Tickets may be purchased online at www.ECUPirates.com or by calling the ECU Athletics Ticket Office at 1-800-DIAL-ECU.
Nurse-Family Partnership participant Tara Boseman, right, speaks about her experience in the program as nurse home visitor Kimberly Harper, left, holds Boseman’s two-month old, Makenzie Bostick, during a roundtable discussion on the Nurse Family Partnership program at East Carolina Heart Institute on Wednesday.
Justin Falls/The Daily Reflector

Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton speaks during a roundtable discussion on the Nurse Family Partnership program.
Justin Falls/The Daily Reflector

Nurses program celebrates successful first year
By Jackie Drake
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When Tara Boseman was attending Pitt Community College and found out she was unexpectedly pregnant, she took the test three times to be sure. After three positive results, she knew she would need some help in the coming months.
“I was scared — I didn’t know what to do,” Boseman said. “I went to the health department and they asked me if I wanted to be in the Nurse Family Partnership.”
The Nurse Family Partnership is a national program started in 1977 that provides free weekly home visits from a specially trained nurse to young women who are pregnant with their first child. Women who meet income requirements can enroll before their 28th week of pregnancy, and nurse visits can continue until the child is 2 years old. Nurses help women have a healthy pregnancy, provide a safe environment, strengthen parenting skills and plan for the future. The program came to North Carolina in Guilford County in 2000. The first mother enrolled in Pitt County a year ago this month.
“My nurse was a big help to me,” Boseman said. “She told me what to expect. I was a week overdue and they had to induce labor, and she explained what that meant. Without her I wouldn’t have known what to do.”
With the help of nurse Kimberly Harper, Boseman gave birth in April to a healthy girl she named Makenzie.

“This program has provided me the opportunity to help these babies and their moms grow together,” Harper said.

In addition to Boseman, the Nurse Family Partnership in Pitt County now has 72 mothers or mothers-to-be enrolled, with 27 babies born so far, said Nancy Stone, Pitt County nurse supervisor.

Program participants and supporters gathered at the East Carolina Heart Institute on Wednesday for a round table discussion to mark the first year’s progress. Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton attended along with Pitt County Health Director John Morrow and Brad Wilson, chairman of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, a major funding source.

“This program is a unique private-public partnership; we couldn’t have done this without support from government and community organizations,” Anne Sayers, state NFP coordinator, said. The NFP has eight programs in 10 counties in North Carolina, which is one of 31 states with active programs. “We are well-positioned for expansion into other counties,” Sayers said.

Supporting the NFP was an easy decision for the foundation, Wilson said. “The goal of our organization is to improve health outcomes in vulnerable populations, and this program has a 30-year track record of success.”

Stone and Sayers shared statistics and success stories from North Carolina and Pitt County of fewer premature births, healthier birth weights, reductions in high-risk actions like drinking and smoking during pregnancy, increased rates of completion of the GED by mothers, and a significant drop in second pregnancies during teenage years.

“This is a life-changing program that makes so much difference in Pitt County and others,” Dalton said. “This benefits the whole community. With healthier babies, that’s fewer health problems down the road. This program ultimately leads to better quality of life, and that’s a win-win situation for everyone.”

When Makenzie cried briefly during Dalton’s remarks, he chuckled and called it “the sound of success.”

For more information, call the Pitt County Health Department at 902-2379.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdralke@reflector.com or (252) 329-9567.
Education advocate wins leadership award
By Jackie Drake
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Retired Greenvile pharmaceutical executive Larry Seigler has been honored for his contributions to education in Pitt County and across the state. Seigler has been named the 10th recipient of the Jay Robinson Leadership Award from the Public School Forum of N.C. Her accepted the award at a luncheon in Raleigh on Monday.

“I thought I was going to faint — I really wasn’t expecting it,” Seigler said after the ceremony. Seigler was one of three finalists; other finalists were N.C. Speaker of the House Rep. Joe Hackney and former state senator Howard Lee.

“I felt so honored just to be there. It was a very humbling experience,” Seigler said.

Seigler was nominated by the late Kathy Taft, a Greiville native and state board of education member, shortly before her death in March. The two were longtime friends.

Born in South Carolina, Seigler grew up in Greensboro and earned his Bachelor’s degree in pharmacy in 1970 from the University of North Carolina. He came to Greenville to work for Burroughs Wellcome pharmaceutical company in 1971. After staying through various sales and mergers, he retired as the vice president of community relations from DSM Pharmaceuticals in 2001.

Throughout his career, Seigler was active in community and employee education outreach, and his volunteer and advocacy efforts in the community were a natural extension. He has been involved in various capacities with the Pitt County Education Foundation, the Pitt County Education Cabinet, Greiville Learning Center, East Carolina University College of Education Advancement Council, Pitt County Communities in Schools and the Regional Science Center. He has founded, led or served on multiple local and state programs, boards, councils and committees.

“The thing that excites me about this award is that even though my name is on it, it’s not about me,” Seigler said. “It’s about all the things we’ve worked together to do for education in Pitt County. There have been a lot of people doing a lot of great things. It’s exciting that Pitt County is recognized as a model in North Carolina for supporting education.”

When asked what he is most proud of from his long list of accomplishments, Seigler said, “The committee asked me that same question in the finalist interviews. It’s not one single thing, it’s the big picture. Sometimes I would be in a compliance committee or program that would affect children statewide, sometimes I was sitting down and reading and talking with one child.

“Both brought such joy to be able to play a part in helping children get a better education.”

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or (252) 329-9567.
UNC-CH reviews Greek rush

CHAPEL HILL -- The death of a fraternity president last year has spurred UNC-Chapel Hill to consider changes in how Greek organizations recruit members.

A campus trustee committee Wednesday began to analyze the fraternity and sorority system, hoping to determine whether changes to recruitment and the eight-week pledge period for new members are necessary.

This is the second time the administration has analyzed the system since the death last summer of Delta Kappa Epsilon president Courtland Smith, who was shot by an Archdale police officer after an encounter along Interstate 85. The shooting, later deemed justifiable, came hours after Smith left a fraternity party.

Last month, UNC trustees reviewed a report recommending that alumni play more of an advisory role for fraternities.

The new review will look at recruitment and pledging at other universities of similar size and culture. Fraternities and sororities at UNC now have three-week recruitment periods at the start of the fall semester, followed by eight-week pledge periods that some say are far too long.

Possible options include pushing recruitment from fall to spring, allowing "rolling" recruitment in which organizations can always add new members and using a performance-based recruitment that gives more leeway to organizations that follow university rules.

Trustee Roger Perry favors moving recruitment and pledging from fall to spring to allow freshmen to get accustomed to college before getting involved in a fraternity or sorority. About 70 percent of students who join Greek organizations do so as freshmen.

"Being forced to go through rush at the beginning of their first semester impedes their ability to assimilate to university life," Perry said.

Effect of pledge period

Greek organizations at most public universities recruit new members in the fall, while private institutions tend to do so in the spring, said Jenny Levering, UNC's assistant dean of students for fraternity and sorority life.

Data suggest freshmen who pledge immediately don't suffer much in the classroom, Levering said. Freshmen who pledged fraternities last fall averaged a 3.097 grade point average, while freshmen sorority members averaged 3.19 GPAs. Each grade point average is just slightly less than the overall average for all fraternity and sorority members, respectively.

Trustee Alston Gardner, who heads the committee undertaking the examination, said the university should reward organizations that follow guidelines and punish those that don't.
That would happen if UNC changed to performance-based recruitment, under which the university would yank an organization's official recognition if it didn't follow university guidelines for Greek organizations or violated hazing or alcohol policies.

Hogan Medlin, UNC's student body president, said changes will work best if they're embraced by Greek organizations and not thrust upon them.

"We can be so much more successful if Greek students buy into it," he explained. "Top-down does not work here."

The trustee committee will discuss the issue at a meeting in September.

eric.ferreri@newsobserver.com or 919-932-2008
Rookie doctors’ 24-hour shifts might be cut to 16
Draft rules also improve oversight

BY LINDSEY TANNER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — Patients will be told when they’re being treated by rookie doctors, who would get shorter shifts and better supervision under proposed work changes for medical residents.

The draft regulations aim to promote patients’ safety and reduce medical errors by enhancing work conditions for sometimes sleep-deprived junior physicians.

The proposal revises regulations adopted seven years ago and would have the biggest effect on interns — new doctors in their first year of residency training in hospitals after graduating from medical school. They would be more closely supervised by experienced doctors, and the maximum length of their work shifts would be cut from 24 hours to 16 hours.

Maximum work shifts would remain 24 hours for residents in their second year and beyond.

Maximum work weeks would remain 80 hours for all hospital residents.

All residents and their supervisors would also be required to explain their roles to patients and explain that supervisors are ultimately in charge of their care.

The proposal comes from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. Dr. Thomas Nasca, the group’s CEO, said the changes are needed to meet the main

TRAINING ON THE JOB

Residency programs, typically lasting three to seven years, give new doctors on-the-job training in patients’ care along with expertise in their chosen specialty.

The programs often involve notoriously long hours that can lead to sleep deprivation, which research shows can contribute to medical errors.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

goals of graduate medical education — assuring patients’ safety while teaching new doctors professionalism and putting patients’ needs above their own.

Some groups including the influential Institute of Medicine, have pressed for stricter regulations. The accrediting group included some but not all of the institute’s recommendations in the revision.

Dr. Sidney Wolfe of Public Citizen is among the advocates who pressed for stricter shift limits for all residents. Working 24 hours without sleep is dangerous for residents and their patients, he said, and shortening hours only for interns “makes no sense at all.”

The draft rules, released Wednesday by the New England Journal of Medicine, will be available for public comment on the accrediting group’s website until Aug. 9. They also require approval from its board of directors. Changes likely won’t be introduced before July 2011.
New route to killing cancer tried

A targeted therapy that has generated excitement for its early success in breast cancer is now being tested in the Triangle on other cancers, including often-deadly ovarian tumors.

Doctors and patients have eagerly anticipated the drugs, which provide an entirely new route to killing tumors that is less toxic than traditional chemotherapies.

Called PARP inhibitors, after the enzyme they target, the drugs disable a key mechanism cancer cells employ to repair themselves. Used in combination with current drugs against breast cancer, PARP inhibitors were shown to add cancer-free months to patients' lives while causing few serious side effects.

Although many cancer treatments have shown early promise only to fade under wider scrutiny, the prospect of a whole new approach has generated buzz even in staid journals such as The New England Journal of Medicine. Last year the journal editorialized on the strength of the small breast cancer trial.

Since then, enthusiasm has only grown, with patients eagerly volunteering for limited spots in clinical trials to gain access to the treatment.

"There are a lot of patients very interested in this," said Dr. Linda Van Le, an oncologist at UNC-Chapel Hill who is helping enroll patients in a clinical trial of a PARP drug for ovarian cancer.

At least nine PARP inhibitor drugs are in different phases of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval process, but none is yet on the market.

As a result, patients can get the drugs only through clinical trials. In addition to the ovarian cancer study at UNC-Chapel Hill, trials are on tap there for lung, breast and colorectal cancers. Doctors at Duke University will soon participate in a PARP inhibitor trial aimed at colon cancer.

Lynn Burrell, 44, of Clayton, was the first to enroll in the ovarian cancer study at N.C. Cancer Hospital in Chapel Hill, which was initially approved to enroll three patients. Van Le said her group quickly filled its quota and was allowed to enlist seven more patients. The trial is led by the drug's manufacturer, Abbott Laboratories.

After being diagnosed with ovarian cancer last year, Burrell had a hysterectomy and chemotherapy. When tumors recently returned in nearby tissue, she seized the chance to try the experimental treatment.

"I was excited about it," Burrell said. "Knowing there are limited chemotherapies for ovarian cancer, this was a great opportunity."

Little residual harm

PARP inhibitors work in a way far different from traditional chemotherapies, which wipe out cancer cells but also kill or damage healthy cells. That residual damage is what causes many of chemo's dreaded side effects - hair loss, nausea, muscle weakness and fatigue.
The new approach, which stems from discoveries about the genetic source of tumors, is much more focused.

It was initially developed to capitalize on a gene mutation evident in some inherited cancers, notably breast cancers associated with the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes. Women who inherit these damaged genes are five times as likely to develop breast cancer and at least 11 times as likely to have ovarian cancer. Men who inherit the mutations are at increased risk for breast, pancreatic and prostate cancers.

Both BRCA1 and BRCA2 are normally helpful genes involved in repairing damaged cells. With the harmful mutation, however, they don't function, so damaged cells grow out of control, building tumors.

Traditional chemotherapy kills most of the disease cells. The remaining stragglers are often wounded, but cannot fix themselves through the usual BRCA mechanism. Instead, a backup repair system springs to action. This second system relies on the PARP enzyme to initiate repairs. Left to regroup, tumor cells recover and multiply, causing a resurgence of the cancer.

PARP inhibitors disable that second cell repair system, so cancer cells have no way to mend after they're hit with chemotherapy. The new drugs also cause far fewer side effects, because they target only the defective cancer cells.

Initially, researchers thought the PARP inhibitors were effective only if a BRCA mutation was present. But recent studies have shown that PARP inhibitors may work regardless of that inherited defect. The UNC-CH study, for one, is exploring the effects of a PARP inhibitor on all ovarian cancers, no matter the BRCA status.

Colon cancer test

And at Duke, doctors plan to test PARP inhibitors against colon cancer, which can be caused by a genetic mutation that affects a different cell repair mechanism than the one involved in inherited breast cancers.

Dr. Alexander Starodub, an oncologist at Duke University, will enlist up to six colon cancer patients in a small national trial of a PARP inhibitor. The approach builds on the findings from the breast cancer trials, using the new drug along with traditional chemotherapies in search of improved results, he said.

Starodub said the excitement surrounding the PARP inhibitors is in many ways typical of how all new cancer drugs are greeted.

"As oncologists, we see the world as a glass half full," he said. "Anything that potentially works, we want to advance as much as possible to help patients."

At the same time, he said, PARP inhibitors are generating an extra dose of enthusiasm. If they work as well as early tests indicate, they would add a much-needed new weapon against a deadly foe.

"This is a new direction," Starodub said, "and every time you have a new avenue, we are all excited."

sarah.avery@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4882
The Old College Try

Team USA is Full of Collegians, but Is That a Good Thing?

By BEN COHEN

To get to the World Cup, most American players are forced to endure an experience that soccer aficionados consider unnecessary, if not cruel: They go to college.

In England, where promising teenagers are scooped up by professional teams and paid professional salaries, the idea that it takes a beautiful mind to play the beautiful game comes across as a bit of a howler.

In England, superstar striker Wayne Rooney became a national celebrity in 2002 when he scored a goal in injury time in his debut for Everton of the English Premier League—at the precocious age of 16.

But guess what? After two games, the Americans—let's call it Team NCAA—are entering Wednesday's final group match in the same position as England's boys, despite the fact that 15 of its 23 members played the game in college. In simultaneous matches Wednesday, the U.S. and England each must defeat its respective opponent (Algeria and Slovenia) to ensure a spot in the knockout round.

Sasho Cirovski, the head coach of the University of Maryland's powerhouse soccer team, calls the current state of affairs "a small victory for college soccer," which he said is "still a vital part in the development process in this country."

Not surprisingly, almost nobody outside the NCAA seems to agree. In fact, the English Football Association recently unveiled a plan to improve the national system for identifying and developing adolescent stars.

Even America's top soccer officials have little good to say about college soccer. "Top young players are anxious to develop their games in a professional environment," says Sunil Gulati, president of the United States Soccer Federation, the governing body for the sport in America. "College soccer cannot—and was not meant to—provide that."
"Those crucial years, where in the rest of the world top players are stepping into professional clubs, our [college] players are perhaps retarded because they're not playing competitive matches year-round," adds Alfonso Mondelo, the director of player development for America's Major League Soccer.

Still, the American system has allowed for a team that tied England in a head-to-head match June 12 and that enters play Wednesday with a better chance of advancing, given the relative weakness of its opponent.

Bobby Clark, the Scottish-born head coach of Notre Dame's soccer team, says NCAA soccer gets criticized by people who don't know anything about it. "It's very easy for people to say we should be doing it like in England," Mr. Clark said. "Well, is England producing that many more tremendous players via their system?"

On the U.S. team, 11 of the 16 players who've taken the field played in college. Not only has the U.S. matched England's record—each team has two draws—the U.S. has scored two more goals (three actually, if you count the one that was inexplicably invalidated).

"When you're talking about almost 70% of the team spending some time in college, that's a heck of a statement," said Maryland's Mr. Cirovski.

Unlike England's coach, Fabio Capello, America's manager, Bob Bradley, is a former college coach who emphasizes teamwork and makes a point to treat his players like players. He keeps the team relatively sequestered and enforces the rules.

Some observers believe a little college can go a long way in professional soccer. "At least one year of college doesn't hurt anybody," said Sigi Schmid, the coach of the Seattle Sounders.

Mr. Schmid is the former coach at UCLA, a school that has sent 14 players to the World Cup over the last 20 years, the most of any American university. Besides promoting maturity, college enables athletes to develop confidence before jumping into the professional leagues against "guys who are 10 and 15 years older," said Mr. Schmid.

In England, by contrast, almost every native player in the Premier League—let alone the national team—left school at 16, the majority without any formal academic qualifications. By 22, the age most college kids graduate, if an English player isn't starting for a pro team, it's probably time to retire.

In future World Cups, U.S. players who skipped college—like the current team's Landon Donovan and Tim Howard—might become more common. The concept of youth academies is gaining traction in the U.S., thanks in part to help from Major League Soccer. But NCAA coaches expect to continue placing college players such as Clint Dempsey, a former Furman midfielder, on the U.S. national team. "The American dream is still sending your son to college," Virginia coach George Gelnovatch said.

—Matthew Futterman and Jonathan Clegg contributed to this article