ECU hosts science camps

The Daily Reflector

Sunday, June 29, 2008

East Carolina University's science classrooms were full of students this summer.

But they were not college students.

Hundreds of children from across the region attended ECU's summer science camps this week.

The science camps — now in their third year — came to ECU through a partnership with the University of North Carolina Morehead Planetarium and GO-Science, a group that has been working to establish a regional science center in Greenville.

The program runs through July 18 and is funded through grants and enrollment fees. Spots are available in the July classes, said director Tammy Lee.

"The students get to enjoy the science camp and realize the careers they can pursue in science and math," Lee said.

This year, more than 300 campers will learn about endangered animals, aerodynamics and marine biology. They'll also investigate mock crime scenes, using techniques such as DNA analysis, and will build their own robots.

The camps are available for students in grades 2-8. Students from Pitt, Beaufort, Craven, Edgecombe and Wilson counties are participating in the programs, Lee said.

The camps run for a week at a time. Students will be on campus for the camps from July 7-11 and July 14-18.

To sign up for the July camps, contact Lee at leeta@ecu.edu or call 328-9364.

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Find this article at:
ECU professor receives safety engineer award

The Daily Reflector

Monday, June 30, 2008

Michael Behm, a professor of technology systems, took a top honor from the American Society of Safety Engineers conference in Las Vegas.

Behm, who teaches occupational safety, received the organization's Academic Practice Specialty's Safety Professional of the Year award. Academic Practice is one of 14 specialties within ASSE. The Safety Professional of the Year award represents outstanding accomplishments in service, scholarship, and education both to the profession and to the practice specialty.

"It is a tremendous honor personally and professionally to receive this award," said Behm. "It really means a great deal to me to be recognized nationally after just four years of academic service here at East Carolina."

University hosts guitar events

ECU will host several world-class classical guitarists July 12-15, during the 12th annual ECU School of Music Guitar Festival and Workshop.

Performers include 2007 solo guitar competition winner Austin Moorhead; Elliot Frank and Valerie Hartzell on July 12; Douglas James and Jason Vieaux on July 13. On July 14, Andrew Zohn and Italian guitarists SoloDuo, Matteo Mela and Lorenzo Micheli will perform. The professional concerts will be followed July 15 with the finals of the ECU solo and youth guitar competitions.

All concerts are at 7:30 p.m. in the AJ Fletcher Music Building on the ECU Campus, except for the Austin Moorhead concert, which will be held at 4:30 p.m.

Ticket are $15 for adults and $10 for students, or a series package may be purchased for a $40 for adults and $20 for students.

Tickets are available at the door or may be ordered in advance by calling 252-328-4788.

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Summit focuses on Latino leadership
Harvard grad says immigration policies are problematic

By Tom Marine
The Daily Reflector

Saturday, June 28, 2008

The United States created its large undocumented immigrant population through contradictory trade and immigration policies, said an award-winning Harvard graduate.

Speaking at the first annual Mexican and Latin American Leadership Summit held on Friday, Helen B. Marrow presented her research on immigration and race relations in eastern North Carolina, which won the 2008 Best Dissertation Award from the American Sociological Association.

Marrow said new immigrants are increasingly undocumented because of a reduction in available and legal routes for migration and slight immigration expansions which have not been sufficient to meet the growing demand.

"We need to think outside the box and re-think what non-citizenship means," Marrow said during her keynote address.

East Carolina University, Pitt Community College and the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities sponsored the forum.

At the beginning of the event, Mayor Pat Dunn said a shared understanding of our differences will show that they ultimately do not matter.

"Nobody ever gets married focusing on their differences," she said. "We must emphasize what we have in common."

Dunn said she hopes everyone attending the summit leaves with a sense of hopefulness, the spirit of listening and a belief in the goodness of humanity.

One of the panel discussions, focused on the economic benefits of building Latino leadership and partnerships, touched on several topics including higher education, civic engagement, legal defense and insurance.

Panel member Ramon Miramontes said shutting the door on immigrant workers will hurt the vitality of the country.

"It's time to be brave," said Miramontes, dean of academic affairs at Los Angeles Southwest College and member of the League of United Latin American Citizens. "It's time to be courageous, to challenge the law and build a coalition of allies.

"To the students, you have to take on this fight. You have the moral high ground in this fight."
The panel also discussed the importance of dispelling myths, such as the myth that immigrants don't pay taxes or that they are a economic burden.

Juvencio Rocha Peralta, president of the Association of Mexicans in North Carolina, said about 300 people attended the summit. He invited everyone to attend a workshop today, aimed at organizing the community to get Latinos registered to vote.

The workshop is being held at the association's office from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"These types of forums open this discussion," Peralta said. "A lot of people do not like change, but our community is growing and it is going to bring changes with it. We want to be part of this change and help address it."

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Find this article at:
http://www.reflector.com/local/content/news/stories/2008/06/28/LatinoSummit.html

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Thorp ready for crash course leading UNC

BY ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer

DURHAM - Holden Thorp's new office will have a significant family presence. Thorp, who becomes UNC-Chapel Hill's new chancellor Tuesday, expects to decorate his new South Building office with the scribblings and amateur art of his two young children, John, 13, and Emma, 9. And over the fireplace, Thorp will hang an aged print depicting the Chapel Hill campus as it was in simpler times. Versions of the print hang on walls across town; few are the century-old version. Thorp's is a hand-me-down, from grandfather to father and now to him.

Thorp's ascension to the top job at Chapel Hill caps a meteoric rise for the 43-year-old Fayetteville native, a 1986 graduate of the university who has taught chemistry, directed the Morehead Planetarium and Science Center and, most recently, led the College of Arts and Sciences.

He expects his first month to be a frenzied crash course: UNC-Chapel Hill 101. He will meet with the deans of each of the university's 14 schools to learn about the issues facing each. Until then, he isn't prepared to discuss any new universitywide priorities, he said.

After his hiring, Thorp received hundreds of notes of congratulation. He answered each handwritten note with a handwritten response. He knows he faces high expectations.

"Some of ... [the notes] are from people I don't know," he recalled. "Whatever people say about the Thorp era, they can say it started off with some good vibes."


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Freshmen to get more attention

NCCU change to increase support

ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

DURHAM - N.C. Central University is giving its university college a makeover, the institution's latest attempt to boost retention and graduation rates.

Until now, the university college has been an umbrella for a number of extension services, including summer school, distance education, continuing education and evening and weekend programs.

Starting Tuesday, those functions are being shifted to a new unit, and the university college and much of its staff will be expanded and refocused to target freshman and sophomore students.

The idea is to put a group of services that has been strewn across campus into one division, give them more resources and focus solely on getting young students onto the right academic track.

The shift, called "re-purposing" in higher education parlance, will cost about $1.6 million in new money for personnel and equipment. The university wants to hire 46 new staff members, from administrators to reading and assessment specialists to tutors and academic advisers. The program also expects to lean heavily on 150 volunteers -- older students, alumni, professors and members of the community who can act as mentors to young students.

It is all an effort to ease the transition to college.

"Many students, even if they were top students in high school, have had a close dependency on their parents," said Bernice Johnson, an assistant vice chancellor who will become the new college's dean in July. "It's a real transition and a rude awakening to have all the freedom and responsibility."

The new college's services will include student support -- advising, orientation, career exploration, mentoring, social etiquette and leadership, engagement and community service.

"Most of these things went on in some fashion, to some degree," Johnson said. "The difference now is that every last freshman will receive all of this. They will get all the same quality and consistency."

Many students leave

For a few years, NCCU officials have placed heavier emphasis on improving retention and graduation rates, a goal now targeted as well by UNC system leaders. Currently, 49 percent of NCCU students graduate within six years of beginning college. The UNC system average is 59 percent.

Many of the students who don't make it are lost between the freshman and sophomore years. For example, about 27 percent of NCCU freshmen in the fall of 2005 didn't return for their second year. That number improved some the following year, when just less than 23 percent left school after one year.

The new college's focus on those first two years will be costly but necessary, Chancellor Charlie Nelms said recently.

"You can't talk student persistence and graduation into existence," he said at a recent meeting of campus trustees. "You have to plan it, and you have to invest in it."
The program will begin this fall and will focus on the university's 1,250 new freshmen and 400 new transfers.

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Editorial: Legal matters
Board mistake undermines confidence

The Daily Reflector

Sunday, June 29, 2008

The Pitt County Board of Education's determination to address the alarming drop-out rate obscured its vision this week when it approved a partnership with a private company to recruit students and help them earn high school degrees. That type of arrangement is not allowed under North Carolina law.

While there is reason to believe a program such as that might prove beneficial to Pitt County, the school board should have examined the governing law before affirming this partnership. Its failure to do so raises questions about its attention to detail and could undermine confidence in the board's leadership.

At its Monday meeting, the school board reached a consensus to pursue a contract with Alternatives Unlimited, a Baltimore-based private company, to institute a Drop Back In program. The company would have recruited recent drop-outs to an accelerated program toward a high school diploma rather than a GED. Public funds would come on a per-pupil basis, and the company planned to employ state-certified teachers to administer classes in multiple locations.

However, North Carolina law requires that education cannot be contracted to a third party. Only state-employed teachers in state-administered schools can issue public school diplomas, a fact county officials learned on Wednesday. The board announced that it would no longer pursue an arrangement with the company absent a change in the law.

Pitt Schools Superintendent Beverly Reep and school board member Michael Dixon sounded tones of disappointment at the outcome. Both expressed their optimism for the program and cite the company's success in Florida. In Broward County, one of four Florida counties with Drop Back In academies, about 1,700 students were involved in the program last year, with about 25 percent completing the requirements.

Pitt County needs such an innovative solution in order to address its deeply concerning drop-out rate. Pitt County saw nearly 1,000 students abandon high school between 2005 and 2007. A number of factors contribute to that total, but the fact remains that the community should fear losing so many young people to a future of low incomes, at best, and incarceration, at worst.

Residents should nod to the school board's efforts in that regard. Members were willing to explore untested ideas, and evidence suggests this program may work in Pitt County. However, the legal issue remains troubling, and represents a significant mistake that needs a full explanation.

Pitt County Schools needs a committed community in its effort to build a superior public education system. Mistakes like this are troubling setbacks. The board will need to account for its failure to confirm the legality of this program and work to restore the confidence lost in this episode.

Vote for this story!
Letter: Empty holsters protest gun laws

Sunday, June 29, 2008

Jimmy Hughes (Public Forum, June 18) wrote that most mass murders occur in places where the victims are disarmed by law. He also noted that several incipient mass murders have been stopped by armed individuals defending themselves and others. Hughes asked why, given these facts, North Carolina law and East Carolina University policy still infringe on the right of students and faculty to carry self-defense weapons.

While I'm sure lawmakers and ECU officials are acting with the best intentions, they are nevertheless preventing members of the university community from defending themselves. They are therefore making violent crime more likely and preventing bystanders from stopping violent crimes that do occur.

Since the undeniable evidence has not yet led the authorities to the conclusion that encouraging the capacity for self-defense is a better safety strategy than enforced helplessness, perhaps it would help to make this point in a different way. Students for Concealed Carry on Campus is a non-partisan Second Amendment civil rights group with 30,000 members nationwide. They sponsor Empty Holster Day, during which students and faculty across the country wear an empty holster to school in protest of state laws and school policies that stack the odds in favor of dangerous criminals and armed killers by disarming law-abiding citizens licensed to carry concealed handguns virtually everywhere else. There are guidelines on how to conduct such a protest safely and legally on the Concealed Campus Web site. Maybe this kind of peaceful civil protest at ECU would help inspire Raleigh lawmakers and ECU officials to set aside their prejudices and consider a policy of non-interference with the Second Amendment rights of ECU students and faculty.

DAVID M. SCHMIDT

Greenville
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Warrant: Carson taken from home

Documents made public Friday reveal the account of a confidential witness

JESSE JAMES DECONTO, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

HILLSBOROUGH - A confidential witness told investigators that Demario Atwater said he and Laurence Lovette Jr. took Eve Carson from her home March 5 after entering through an open door, according to search warrants made public Friday.

The documents offered the first detailed public accounts of the crime, in which Atwater and Lovette are accused of killing Carson, the student body president at UNC-Chapel Hill.

According to the witness, Atwater told her he and Lovette forced Carson into the back seat of her Toyota Highlander and drove her to an ATM.

Lovette shot Carson multiple times, and Atwater subsequently shot her with a different weapon, the witness told investigators.

Lovette is also charged with first-degree murder in the slaying of Abhijit Mahato, a Duke University engineering student from Bengal, India. Mahato was found dead Jan. 18, shot during what Durham police have called a citywide robbery spree.

In requesting the warrants, police investigating Carson's murder said they were looking for a shotgun and a .25-caliber pistol. There is no indication they found either weapon.

Based on the description of the crime outlined in the search warrants, Orange County District Attorney Jim Woodall said he plans to pursue additional indictments on charges other than first-degree murder. Those might include kidnapping and burglary.

Carson's autopsy report is set to become public Monday and should reveal more details about her death. Her body was found at 5:30 a.m. March 5 on a residential street in Chapel Hill; she was wearing sweat pants and a T-shirt.

Over the next two days, Atwater and Lovette took $1,400 from Carson's bank account, the witness said.

According to the documents, police found the confidential witness through an anonymous tipster who called CrimeStoppers on March 11.

The tipster said she had spoken to a man she knew as "Rico," who told her that he and someone else had taken Carson to an ATM. "Rico" told the caller that he and the other man planned to obtain Carson's bank card PIN before killing her.

The caller then told an investigator the name of the confidential witness she said knew more details.

On March 12, investigators interviewed the confidential witness, who identified "Rico" as Atwater. She said she had spoken with Atwater after learning that his photo had appeared in a March 7 surveillance photo from a BP convenience store at 1002 N. Alston Ave. in Durham. Carson's ATM card was used at the store that day.
Police arrested Atwater on March 12. After his arrest, according to the warrants, he admitted being in Carson's Highlander in Chapel Hill on March 5 and identified himself as the person whose image was captured in the BP security photo, according to the warrants.

He identified Lovette as the person in another surveillance photo taken at an ATM at the Bank of America in Chapel Hill, the warrants state. The next day, police arrested Lovette.

Furthermore, police recorded a cell phone call in which Atwater talked to an informant about his involvement in the crime, according to the documents.

Despite the witness' statements, Woodall said police have not confirmed the suspects were inside Carson's home. At this point, they are not sure, he said.

Superior Court Judge Allen Baddour ordered the release of six search warrants Friday. A seventh was returned to the court clerk by police only this week and remains under seal, as does a written motion by the defense.

Investigation has progressed

Woodall assured Baddour that the police investigation had progressed to the point where releasing the search warrants would not compromise its integrity or the safety of the informants.

"The state has taken every precaution necessary to protect those individuals," Woodall said.

Baddour said the defendants probably already know who the informants are because they have had access to the sealed search warrants. Still, defense attorneys objected to Baddour's order, saying news coverage would convict their clients before the trial ever began.

"Anything that causes pretrial publicity is going to taint the jury pool," said Lovette's attorney, Karen Bethea Shields. "That's just common sense."

But Baddour said the judicial process -- including pretrial motions, jury selection and instructions to the jury -- would ensure a fair trial.

Atwater's attorney, Jonathan Broun, declined to say whether he or co-counsel James Williams planned to challenge any of the evidence contained in the search warrants before trial.

The documents show police investigated whether Carson was sexually assaulted. Woodall said Friday that she was not.

What police sought, found

The search warrant for Atwater's and Lovette's homes states that police were seeking a shotgun, a .25-caliber pistol, ammunition, hooded sweatshirts, blue jeans, white athletic shoes, a black coat, a Houston Astros baseball cap, gloves, Carson's ATM card, keys, purse, wallet or identification. They also sought cell phones and computers or digital storage devices, cash and cameras. The documents indicated that police were looking for gang-related material, including clothing, bandannas or documents.

Documents indicate police did not find all of these things. At Atwater's home at 2507 S. Roxboro St., Apt. 11, they seized assorted vehicle keys, two shotgun shells, a Motorola cell phone, two cameras, one house key, assorted notes, clothing and drug paraphernalia.

Police also collected samples of hair, saliva and blood from Lovette and Atwater for DNA evidence.

Police seized more than a dozen pairs of shoes, mostly athletic sneakers, from Lovette's home at 1231 Shepherd St. in Durham. They took eight pairs of shoes from Atwater's residence. Probation records show that Durham police were investigating Lovette in a case of stolen shoes.

TIMELINE

The release of search warrants in the Eve Carson case Friday provides the following sequence of events concerning suspects Demario Atwater and Laurence Alvin Lovette Jr.:

MARCH 5, 5:30 A.M.: Police find Carson's body on Hillcrest Drive in Chapel Hill. Carson had been shot several
times.

MARCH 6: Carson's Toyota Highlander is located. Police recover a partial shoeprint on a Bank of America receipt that investigators say was generated when the suspects made a withdrawal.

MARCH 11, 9:58 P.M.: An anonymous caller tells CrimeStoppers of Orange County that someone she knows as "Rio" told her he and another person took Carson to an ATM and planned to kill her. The caller refers police to a confidential witness she says knows more about the crime.

MARCH 12, 7:09 AM: The State Bureau of Investigation interviews the confidential witness. The witness identifies "Rio" as Atwater and says he told her that he and Lovette entered Carson's house through an open door, forced Carson into her Toyota Highlander and took her to an ATM. The witness says Atwater and Lovette took $1,400 from Carson's bank account and that Carson was shot multiple times -- by Lovette and then by Atwater. The witness says Lovette lives on Shepherd Street in Durham.

MARCH 12: Atwater is arrested and charged with the murder. He tells police he was in Chapel Hill the night Carson died and inside her Toyota Highlander. He also confirms he is the man in a BP convenience store surveillance photo and identifies Lovette as the man pictured in an ATM surveillance photo taken the morning Carson was killed.

MARCH 13: Lovette is arrested and charged with Carson's murder.

COMPILED BY STAFF WRITER KRISTIN BUTLER

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Cancer cure in mice to get human trials

Wake Forest University scientists studying genetic immunity in mice to start testing humans

ZOE ELIZABETH BUCK, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

Clinical trials begin this week at Wake Forest University on a cancer therapy that has completely cured the disease in every mouse tested over the past few years.

The therapy involves the transfusion of white blood cells from cancer-resistant donors into cancer patients, letting loose a uniquely qualified army of disease fighters to attack the invading tumor.

Some scientists are skeptical about the move from mice to humans, but others are excited about the possibility of success.

Dr. Zheng Cui, the lead investigator, and his team at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine announced the move to human clinical trials Saturday at the Understanding Aging Conference in Los Angeles. The team recently won approval for human trials from the Food and Drug Administration.

"This is the first time that such aggressive cancer in mice has been eradicated like this," Cui said. "This is a very dramatic result."

The result is especially dramatic considering its discovery stemmed from a series of accidents, starting with one extraordinary mouse.

In the late 1990s, Cui and his team were using mice as experimental cancer patients for their research, injecting them with malignant cells. Within three to four weeks, as expected, all the injected mice developed tumors and died.

But in 1999, for some reason, one mouse didn't develop tumors and didn't die.

Dr. Lloyd Old of the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, who was collaborating in the research, later said that if Cui had been trained as an immunologist, he would have thrown out the mouse right then. But Cui was trained as a medical doctor, and his curiosity led him to continue testing the oddball mouse, injecting it with higher and higher lethal doses of carcinogens.

No matter how many times the researchers tried to give the mouse cancer, it didn't develop a tumor, and it didn't die.

The mouse was immune to cancer.

Making sure

As cautious scientists, Cui and his team decided to breed the mouse and test its offspring for cancer immunity.

"We knew that if we hadn't made a mistake, something very dramatic was happening, but we had to know we weren't making a mistake," he said.

It wasn't a mistake. Three of the mouse's seven grandchildren didn't get cancer, either. Whatever was causing the cancer resistance was built into the mouse's family genes. News of the finding created a stir.
"Our lives were suddenly overtaken by an unexpected media frenzy," Cui wrote in 2003. Headlines proclaimed a cure for cancer -- albeit in mice.

"People got very excited for a reason," he said. "It was exciting. We had direct evidence for cancer immunity that we could reproduce at will. It was a very profound result, and it was not subtle. I don't think people could have overreacted."

The next step was to figure out how to transfer that cancer immunity from the special mice to mice that were dying of cancer. The solution is apparently hidden in the mICE’s white blood cells, which are like a tiny biological army. They are carried in the bloodstream to fight infection and disease throughout the body.

For some reason -- Cui and his team don't know why -- the white blood cells from the immune mice could defeat the cancer every time, while the other mice's white blood cells were unable to stave off the infection.

The majority of contemporary cancer research focuses on these cellular soldiers. But most research seeks to isolate certain parts of the cells and stimulate them in test tubes, a complex process.

Cui's procedure is simple.

"We don't have to do anything to manipulate the white blood cells," Cui said. All he and his team did was transfuse the immune mouse cells into the sick mice, and the tumors melted away.

"It's like we discovered aspirin, only instead of curing headaches it's curing cancer," Cui said. "We don't know how it works exactly, but it doesn't really matter."

A leap forward

Rather than spend years determining the mechanisms behind the miracle, Cui thought it was more important to press forward toward clinical trials in humans.

But Cui's eagerness to move forward could lead to problems.

"Anything that seems like a miracle always runs into roadblocks in the future," said Vivek Rangnekar, a cancer researcher at the University of Kentucky. "If you don't know the mechanism behind what is going on, you will not be equipped to deal with those roadblocks. For example, they could find that the cancer builds up a resistance, and if they don't know what's going on they will not be equipped to deal with that."

As Cui moves forward, he must first find a source for the cancer-fighting white blood cells -- the human equivalent of that miraculous mouse.

Next week, Cui's team will begin a search for cancer-resistant humans.

Next step: humans

Whether people are immune to cancer is probably rooted in their genetic background.

"Some families just don't have any cancer for generations, even among heavy smokers," he said. "Chances are it is probably not because they are lucky."

These cancer-resistant people are identified by examining how well their white blood cells fight off cancer cells in a test tube. Once a set of donors is selected, the clinical trial will move into the treatment stage, harvesting white blood cells from immune people and transfusing them into cancer patients. The process will be relatively painless by contrast with current cancer treatments such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy, which often have debilitating side effects.

"It's basically a blood transfusion -- a safe procedure that goes on all the time," Cui said.

Doubts and pessimism

Other researchers remain cautious. Dr. Len Lichtenfeld, deputy chief medical officer of the American Cancer Society, said it was important to note that we simply won't know anything about the viability of the therapy for humans until the clinical trial begins.

"We're always hopeful," he said, "but we have to temper our enthusiasm."

Some scientists expressed pessimism about the clinical trials. Lab mice have such close genetics that any two members of the same strain are essentially identical twins. This is not true in humans. Some experts worry that the cancer patients' bodies will reject the donated cells from the blood transfusion, or worse, that the white blood cells, designed to identify and attack anything foreign to them, will attack the body of the patient from the inside.

Cui said he is aware that the procedure comes with risks. But, he said, the white blood cell transfusions have been used in other fields of medicine for years.

"We've minimized all the risk, especially for these first few rounds of trials," he said. "We don't know what will happen, but we hope this will cure several types of cancer and help a few people in the next months. This could be another arrow in the cancer treatment quiver."

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Tar Heel of the Week:
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Kennedy chose Mozart of brain surgeons

KIRSTIN COLLINS, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

It was a Friday afternoon, and Dr. Allan Friedman was headed for a vacation in Canada when his cell phone rang.

Sen. Ted Kennedy, newly diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumor, had searched the nation for the best neurosurgeon to remove the growth -- and he wanted Friedman.

By the following Monday, a horde of reporters was camped outside Duke Medical Center, and Friedman was performing a tricky operation inside the brain of one of the country's most powerful politicians. It was at once an honor and a burden for a man who has spent 34 years building a reputation as one of the world's leading brain surgeons.

A successful surgery would be a boon to his career and to Duke. But the slightest mistake or problem would be scrutinized by the nation.

Fortunately, as a man who spends four days a week slicing into brains, Friedman is used to pressure. Kennedy's surgery was successful. And now, after hiding from the media during the initial frenzy, Friedman has agreed to step out of the shadows.

Friedman, 59, says operating on Kennedy provided a rare brush with celebrity. Kennedy had guards posted in the hallways and was taken to the heliport, away from the glare of cameras, for exercise.

But in most ways, the surgeon says, it was just another day on the job.

"It's not like you play your B game all the time, and now you're going to play your A game," he says.

Since coming to Duke as a medical resident in 1974, Friedman has helped build Duke's Preston Robert Tisch Brain Tumor Center into a mecca for those seeking care after devastating diagnoses. It is one of a handful of such centers nationwide.

About 45,000 people will be diagnosed with brain tumors this year in the United States, according to the American Brain Tumor Association. Cancerous brain tumors are among the leading causes of cancer death for children.

When Friedman arrived at Duke, the center was a small group of doctors who cared only for children with brain tumors. He pushed to expand it and begin treating adults.

The center now sees patients from around the country, many of whom have been offered little hope of recovery or long-term survival. A team of oncologists, surgeons and psychologists work together to develop a treatment plan for each patient. Researchers study cases in hopes of developing new and more effective therapies.

Friedman does the bulk of the center's surgeries on adults.

Giving patients hope

Even after more than three decades caring for the desperate and dying, he still sees his job with the optimistic
eyes of a new doctor. Many times his role is to extend a life rather than to save it, but he sees every day that he gains for a patient as a victory.

"You gave them hope, and they lived long enough to see their granddaughter or see their child graduate from high school," Friedman says.

Marc Samsky, a rising senior at Duke who plans to attend medical school, is part of a mentoring program that includes Friedman and other Duke doctors.

In following Friedman through his rounds, the student sensed the doctor's dedication not simply to medicine, but to patients.

"Just talking to him 10 minutes, you can tell he has a passion for helping people, and you can see it in the way he talks to his patients. He asks them how they are doing. His tone is very comforting," says Samsky. "His main concern is his patient, which is another reason Kennedy came here."

Friedman brings that caring approach to those he mentors, says Kim Imbesi, a rising Duke senior and lacrosse player who is considering becoming a doctor.

"He makes all of us call him Allan. We're not allowed to call him Dr. Friedman," she says, "He's very personal. He comes to my games."

Friedman has hopes that one day the center's work will make cancerous brain tumors curable. Now, many patients die within a few years of being diagnosed.

During his time at Duke, Friedman says he has watched the prospects for brain cancer patients brighten considerably -- at least in part because of the work of the center. He is now a co-director.

Friedman says neurologists have gone from treating brain tumors with a standard surgery and a toxic one-size-fits-all drug to tailoring care to the specific needs of each patient. The center has helped develop a host of new cancer drugs, and he has been among the pioneers of a kind of brain surgery that leaves patients, including Kennedy, awake during the process.

Friedman first saw awake surgery done on patients with epilepsy in the early 1980s during a fellowship in Canada. He returned to Duke convinced that it could work for those with brain tumors as well.

Awake surgery has since become a common method of brain surgery at Duke and many other hospitals.

Leaving the patient awake allows surgeons to avoid cutting into critical parts of the brain. Friedman tests by shocking a part of the brain with an electric current; if the current leaves the patient unable to talk, for example, he knows to navigate around that spot.

"When you look at the brain," Friedman says, "it's not color-coded."

**Changing course**

Friedman grew up in urban Chicago, one of three children of an accountant and a homemaker. He majored in physics in college and went to medical school with plans to be a medical researcher.

But when he did his clinical rotations, he decided he didn't want to be the guy crunching mathematical equations in the basement. He wanted to be the guy making decisions, taking action, helping patients who desperately needed it.

He started his surgical residency in 1975 and never looked back.

He married a fellow neurosurgeon, and the couple have three grown children. One is about to head to medical school, and the other two are undergraduates.

His colleagues say Friedman, who is affable and fiercely intelligent without a trace of arrogance, was born for the job.

Dr. Henry Friedman, an oncologist who is also co-director at the center and is not related to Allan Friedman, says his co-worker has a deft hand in the operating room. But he says Friedman also has a rare ability to
manage a patient's total care, not just to make the needed cuts. He sees his colleague's skills as prodigious gifts rather than learned behavior.

"He works hard, but that's not it," Friedman said. "I don't know. What makes a Mozart? What makes a Michael Jordan?"

Henry Friedman says it was no surprise that the Kennedys picked his colleague; he thinks of him as the best neurosurgeon in the world. But Allan Friedman says he never expected to do Kennedy's surgery, even after he was invited to a Boston meeting with several other doctors to make recommendations for Kennedy's care.

With Kennedy, as with any other patient, Friedman says he was simply happy to help him beat back a devastating disease.

His job is one that many would consider among the highest-pressure careers on the planet. But Friedman says he doesn't think of it that way.

"It's a feeling of, 'Let's get in there, and I'm going to accomplish something,' " Friedman says. "It's not, 'Oh my God, what if.' "

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