THE DAILY CLIPS

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Privacy presents challenges in sex cases
By Jennifer Swartz
The Daily Reflector
Tuesday, July 5, 2011

Eight sexual offenses were reported in Greenville in the 31 days between May 23 and June 22. Daily police case reports did not say much about them.

They did not say where incidents occurred, offered little to describe their nature, and concealed the names of the victims. People involved with investigating and prosecuting the crimes and counseling the victims mostly say that's a good thing.

State law, procedure, policy and an unwritten understanding aimed at preserving the privacy and dignity of victims is carefully balanced in North Carolina with the need to inform residents about crime and keep them safe. It can be like walking a tightrope, police and sheriff's detectives, prosecutors and university officials said.

“It's hard to raise awareness because most crimes that we do educate people on we're allowed to give a lot of specifics,” said Glen Webb, a Greenville police detective with the department's special victims unit. “In sexual assault cases you're allowed to give almost none.”

“That's a very, very touchy crime when we're dealing with victims who have been sexually assaulted,” Pitt County Sheriff's Lt. Paula Dance said. “Yes, we are law enforcement officers who have a duty to make the public aware that these things are happening, but at the same time we have a duty to protect the privacy of that victim.”

Reported sexual assault cases have remained steady through the years, officials said. It is not known how many go unreported, but the number is believed to be significant.

n Pitt County, anywhere from 24 to 48 rapes have been reported annually since 2001, according to uniform crime reporting statistics compiled by the State Bureau of Investigation. The SBI serves as a state clearinghouse for all part-one crime figures from reporting departments. Rape is the only sex crime counted as part of the data.

But the total number of sexual offenses excluding children, not tracked as part of UCR reporting, likely is much higher.

Two years' worth of data complied by the sheriff's office show an additional 23 cases that do not fall under the part-one crime category of rape.
Between June 2009 and June 2011, four indecent exposure, four peeping, nine sexual battery and six other sexual offenses occurred during the period involving victims older than 18.

A check of Greenville police reports shows an average of at least one sex offense report per week. The incidents include rape, which are included in the UCR stats, but also involve other types of offenses that don't show up in state and national reporting.

A large number of cases in a college town such as Greenville are incidents involving acquaintances, often referred to as date rape. Such crimes do not necessarily pose an imminent public threat, officials said.

In general, figuring out what information to release to keep the campus safe is usually obvious and always a good idea as long as it is factual, East Carolina University officials said.

“Our first priority is taking care of our victim — protecting them from information that's released that isn't necessary to be released, personal information,” said Bill Koch, associate vice chancellor in charge of campus safety.

“That is first and foremost in our mind,” he said. “In my view there are very few instances there is information the public needs to know to protect themselves that would give away something personal about the victim. I think there is more of a morbid interest that people have in knowing the details.”

Groups that offer support to victims said the focus needs to shift to the offense.

“We want to talk about the crime committed and not the identity of the victim,” said Tracy Kennedy, assistant director of the REAL Crisis Center and Pitt County's rape victim's advocate.

“Sexual assault is the most under-reported crime in our nation,” she said. “Victims struggle in their fear of disclosure of the crime. Part of this fear is the community knowing about their victimization before they are given adequate time to decide what they want to do.”

Getting such sensitive cases to prosecutors can be tough, detectives said.

“Closing the case by arrest is extremely difficult,” Webb said. “Once you start the investigative process, other than their safety, things don't improve for the victim. “We take great strides in protecting the victim both emotionally and physical, and the evidence,” he said. “It's just a full effort. And even then it's sometimes not enough to get a conviction.”

Still, things have come a long way, officials said. Specially trained officers and deputies, forensic nurses in the field, hospital workers and advocates have banded together to bring a unique and effective response team and protocol to Pitt County.
“There are people in every profession that have stepped up and said, ‘I want to help sexual assault victims,’” Kennedy said.

“I think over the years, processes have been put into place to make it as victim-friendly as possible,” said District Attorney Clark Everett, who estimated from 20 to 25 sexual assault cases are heard in Pitt County courts annually.

Consistent response and evidence processing, and the collection of DNA, has transformed prosecutors' ability to gain convictions and exonerate the innocent, Everett said.

Examining trends and educating the community consistently before crimes occur are key to halting the number of assaults, authorities said. Education efforts among law enforcement, advocacy groups and the university have shifted to highlight less obvious dangers.

“We spent many years talking about ‘stranger danger,’ we spent many years talking about watching your drink,” Kennedy said. “In all actuality you need to watch friends we let in the house and how much we drink.

“Now that we look at the crime itself, we need to look at the reality that most of our rapes, at least 50 percent of our rapes in Pitt County, happen within the victim's home.”

Overcoming stigma and a tendency to judge victims also is critical, officials said. An it-won't-happened-to-me mentality is pervasive among women who may point to style of dress, drinking habits and other behavior that can be blamed for setting attacks in motion, advocates and officials said.

“As long as I can find something she didn't do quite right, then I can say I'm safe,” is common thinking, Kennedy said. “The truth is, if I can't find she did wrong, then I have to admit it could happen to me.

“We can all become a victim of sexual assault,” Kennedy said. “However, there are a lot of steps we can take to protect ourselves.”

“It changes a person forever, and it's not something people tend to shake,” Webb said. “Our goal is obviously to preserve a safe city. This type of crime is not one we tolerate or take lightly.”

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ECU student studies abroad in India

By Lynsey Horn
The Daily Reflector
Tuesday, July 5, 2011

Spending her summer abroad was an easy decision for one student at East Carolina University, but the bonds she formed with a group of children made returning home the hardest part.

Senior social work and religious studies double major Hannah Pittman spent three and a half weeks of her summer studying in India and had the opportunity to work with the children of Tong-Len. Tong-Len is a poverty alleviation organization founded by a Buddhist monk that brings clean water, health programs and education to six slum communities totaling about 3,000 people. The organization has two youth hostels where 40 children from the slums live and go to school.

Pittman recalls her experience with two little girls who ran up and grabbed her hand as soon as she walked into the hostel. They introduced themselves as Ranjeeta and Savita, and they wanted to dance to one of their favorite songs, “Barbie Girl.” The three formed an instant bond and spent the day doing their hair and nails, dancing and just being girls.

At the end of the day, the two little girls said their good-byes. One said to Pittman, “Remember me forever.”

Pittman described her experience with the Tong-Len children as “one of the most touching things I’ve ever experienced.”
She said she has wanted to go to India for a long time, but taking classes from Derek Maher is what convinced her to participate in studying abroad. Maher is an associate professor of religious studies at ECU and has been traveling to India for 20 years.

Pittman called him an “awesome guide” and a “guru.” He has been working with Tong-Len for six years and started Tong-Len USA. Maher has taken close to 100 students to India to work with Tong-Len and said that Pittman was inspired by being there.

“People live different lives and follow different rhythms, but they're equally as beautiful. She really got that,” Maher said. “She really understood deeply what Tong-Len was about.”

The experiences she had in India and with Tong-Len, Pittman said, changed her perspective on her life. Some people go expecting great epiphanies, but “you can't force them,” she said. “They just happen on their own. You learn a lot about yourself and other people. I realized I took a lot of things for granted.”

Clean water is one example. Pittman learned that prior to the daily access that Tong-Len provides, many of the slums' only access to clean water was from one quarter-sized pipe for two hours a day.

Education is another example.

“They are the brightest kids I've ever met,” Pittman said about the children of Tong-Len. Like water access, education was almost non-existent in the slums before Tong-Len. “It's very apparent how they totally do not take education for granted,” Pittman said. Children living in the hostels come from a life where they had very little. Now, some speak three or four languages and, as a whole, they scored top marks on statewide standardized tests.

“These kids live to go to school. They love it,” Pittman said.

Forty children live in the hostels of Tong-Len and go to school regularly. A new building is being constructed to make room for 60 more. The kids who do not live in the hostels have school tents in their slums that Maher said his students from prior years helped build.

Pittman worked with Tong-Len for two days and spent the rest of the time traveling to seven different sites, visiting religious sites and leaders, including the Dalai Lama, and sampling the food. As a vegetarian she said, “it was really nice to be in a country full of vegetarians.”

She also kept a journal of all her experiences to get credit hours for the trip. Although her time with Tong-Len was short, it made an impact.
“It dramatically changed the lives of so many people,” she said. For graduation, Pittman will be asking for another trip to India, where she hopes continue her work with the Tong-Len.

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ECU student Alyssa Robinson, center, leads a group of incoming freshmen and their parents on a tour of the campus during student orientation Monday morning. (Rhett Butler/The Daily Reflector)

**Preparing to be a Pirate**

By **Courtney Lindstrand**
The Daily Reflector
Sunday, July 3, 2011

Excitement with a dash of nervousness is the overall feeling buzzing about groups of rising freshmen as they descend upon East Carolina University's campus this summer. Incoming students get their first taste of what it's like to be a Pirate during ECU's summer orientation program.

The program divides about 4,000 incoming freshman into eight different orientation sessions of about 520 students that take place during June and July.

Each two-day session is jam-packed with activities that help students register for classes, learn more about student life and organizations, and get a feel for ECU's campus. “There was a lot of information but they made it fun,” said Christy Castine, a future freshman and orientation participant. “I already feel more prepared.”

Some of the main goals of the program are to make sure that students are fully introduced to their college community and that they are educated about all the resources ECU has to offer them.

“I think that by the time they leave they are exhausted, but they have a real sense of what they need to be successful at ECU. They feel like, I am a pirate now, and I am ready to come to school,” said Mary Beth Corbin, director of the Office of Student Transitions and First Year Programs.

Orientation also provides parents of future Pirates with information that will allow them to better understand all that ECU offers and make them more comfortable with their student's transition to college.
Debbie Umberger, a parent of an incoming freshman, said that the program “took a bit of fear out” of sending her oldest child away to a large university.

Orientation assistants are the key to the success of the orientation program. They are current students who are able to give insider information and honest answers to any questions students or parents might have about academics or social life at ECU.

Justin Davis, a 2011 orientation assistant, said that after students leave orientation “they feel like they are at home and comfortable and they feel accepted” on ECU's campus. Students even have the option to stay overnight in the dormitories on-campus. This experience is highly recommended by orientation organizers.

“It gives them their first taste of sharing a room and it's a great opportunity to meet other students,” Corbin said.

The 2011 Orientation Program has seen some changes since last summer's program. “We have included faculty more. Having them speak to students about expectations in the classroom and the differences between high school and college has been a really positive addition,” Corbin said.

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Children with autism look forward to social activities at this East Carolina University camp.

Autism is marked by impaired social interaction. But this is a place where youngsters with a range of communication disorders, including autism, have fun while playing games that subtly encourage socializing. Pirate SPEECH Camp's acronym stands for speech-language education and enrichment for children.

This is the second summer that Pitt County Schools speech pathologist Tracy Lancaster has worked at the camp.

On Wednesday morning, she pointed to a parachute game in which a group of children cooperated by lifting a parachute full of balls into the air while also taking turns running underneath it.

“They're working together,” she said. “They're so attentive. They're not going off into their own little worlds.”

Greenville parent Ken Soderstrom said this is the second year that his 11-year-old son, Samuel, has attended the five-week camp held three mornings a week. “He enjoys it, and he seems to talk more when he gets done,” he said. “They engage him.”

The camp is a summertime offshoot of the speech-language clinic at the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at ECU's College of Allied Health Sciences. It was started four years ago by Julia Morrow, speech-language clinical coordinator. She describes it as “intensive intervention with a fun summer camp atmosphere.”
The camp has grown since its inception from eight children to the maximum of 16, divided into two age groups. It's held in donated space at St. Paul's Episcopal Church's parish hall.

The $50 cost per child is supplemented by a contribution from the Pitt County chapter of the Autism Society of North Carolina. Morrow said the camp is a success because its predictable structure makes the children feel comfortable.

“That gives them the freedom then to grow in their communication skills,” she said. With nearly a one-to-one ratio of staff, graduate students and volunteers to children, there's plenty of special attention.

The day starts with the morning's “music and movement,” with the children singing while acting out the lyrics.

The children are called on to supply locations where the sticky bubble gum has stuck. When one child says knees, they all touch their knees. It's a boisterous game.

Parent Christie Nuckolls of Winterville keeps her arms around Luke, 5, who's autistic, helping him take part in the game.

Parents can stay for the first activity of the day to help their children make the transition to camp.

Nuckolls said Luke attended the pirate camp last summer, and he wanted to return. “I think that acclimating to a lot of noise and people and structure, all these things are so important for him,” she said. “He's a little overwhelmed right now, but he's handling it. It kind of gets him desensitized to chaos. That's kind of life, isn't it?”

The activities are broken into sections, and there's a clear demarcation between them, supplying the children the structure they crave.

Volunteer Erica Brinson, a local dance teacher who works with special-needs children, led one activity in which the children used elastic bands to practice stretching moves.

The children also broke into groups to play a quieter “Around the World” game, pretending they were preparing to take a trip to a foreign land.

Lori Kincannon, a clinical supervisor, said the children are asked questions using an approach that's geared to them, so they're able to respond.

For a trip to China, they learned the difference between chopsticks and a fork. Later, they would chomp on the appropriate food: fortune cookies. In another room, a group of older children pretended they were headed to Italy.
Parent Frances Purvis of Halifax County said she's happy to drive to Greenville so her 5-year-old son, John Clark, can attend. Seeing other children in similar circumstances also helps her son, she said.

“He's gotten to the point where some of his friends are starting to notice he has a speech delay,” Purvis said.

At the pirate camp, he has found mates and a supportive crew. “He sees a lot of kindness and understanding that he's not going to see anywhere else,” Purvis said.

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The water level at Debordieu Beach can rise to over the beach wall at times and has already started washing away the sand from in front of those homes. Wealthy landowners at Debordieu Beach are fighting to slow down erosion on their seashore, but their proposal is drawing fire from scientists, who say the erosion plan could damage a nationally known research area just down the coast. The Baruch research area is one of the nation's few pristine, undisturbed salt marsh systems. - Kim Kim Foster-Tobin /kkfoster@thestate.com

**Storm damage could cost SC tax payers**

S.C. law allows building in harm’s way

By SAMMY FRETWELL
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Oceanfront property owners with state permits to build closer to the beach

A little-known section of state law has allowed property owners to build large beach houses in storm-threatened areas near the ocean — development that critics say could one day cost taxpayers a bundle.

About 60 seaside landowners have persuaded state regulators to grant special permits so they can build closer to the beach than South Carolina law otherwise allows, state records show.

In more than a few cases, magnificent houses approaching 5,000-square feet have been built legally along some of the most erosion-scarred sections of beach, including parts of Debordieu, the Isle of Palms, Garden City and Daufuskie Island. Records show some of the homes are at least 20 feet closer to the ocean than state law would have allowed without the special permits.
That’s a problem, critics say, because it increases the chances that taxpayers
eventually will pay to help property owners protect their homes from beach
erosion or rebuild them after a major storm.

People whose homes are threatened by the sea often seek government-funded
beach renourishment projects to temporarily widen beaches. Taxpayers have spent
more than $200 million on such projects in South Carolina since the 1980s —
including beaches where homes have been built with special permits.

Oceanfront landowners also sometimes seek government approval to build sand-
trapping devices — groins that jut out into the ocean. Those slow beach erosion
where they’re built, but they erode beaches and damage property downstream.

After big storms, the government sometimes has to bail out the federal flood
insurance program to pay for damage to oceanfront homes.

“The problem is that our current policies and law let people move to high hazard
areas, then ask for public relief,” said John Mark Dean, a University of South
Carolina marine scientist who has more than 20 years of expertise on state coastal
policy.

East Carolina University geologist Stan Riggs, an expert on beach erosion, said
approving special permits for building closer to the ocean is short-sighted. Not
only is the sea level rising, but storms are an unavoidable reality, he said.

“These areas are going to be wiped out when the next storm comes through,”
Riggs said, and seaside landowners “are the first people crying at the door when
they get wiped out.”

**Owners say no favors granted**

State coastal policies, including whether to continue issuing special permits to
build near the beach, are a point of increasing discussion these days in South
Carolina.

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control has scheduled a public
hearing Thursday to review plans for a new oceanfront building on Folly Beach
that critics say would jut too far onto the shore. DHEC also is contemplating
whether to issue permits to bolster seawalls that protect homes at an exclusive
Daufuskie Island resort near Hilton Head Island.

Meanwhile, the state Blue Ribbon Committee on Shoreline Management is
examining whether South Carolina needs to tighten its beach management laws or
give up on the 23-year-effort to move construction away from the immediate
shore.

The law was supposed to push development back from the seashore over time to
minimize the hazard to coastal property and protect public beaches from increased
erosion. But the called-for “retreat” from the beach hasn’t happened. And the
1988 law contains sections that, in many cases, have allowed development closer to the ocean — including the provision for special permits.

Records obtained by The State newspaper show that the majority of the special permits — 27 — have been granted for landowners in Charleston County, mostly at the Isle of Palms and Seabrook Island. The majority of the others were in Beaufort and Georgetown counties. But special permits have been issued in every oceanfront county since the Legislature amended the 1988 law in 1990 to allow the exceptions, according to DHEC.

Among those who have received the permits are state policymakers, business people and a nationally known sports figure, according to public records reviewed by The State newspaper.

People have built houses close to the ocean on more than 40 of 65 lots after receiving special permits, records show. Few requests for permits have been denied.

Property owners interviewed by The State newspaper said they received no special favors and were merely exercising their legal right to seek the exemptions.

State coastal regulators say they are required by law to grant permits if landowners follow the rules. The law says the department may issue a special permit near the beach as long as homes aren’t built on top of “a primary oceanfront sand dune” or on the active beach. If erosion begins washing the ocean under a house, the person who got the permit must move the home – although DHEC has never required that.

“DHEC staff discretion is limited,” agency spokesman Dan Burger said in an email.

Critics say the law needs strengthening, but they also question whether DHEC is influenced politically in making decisions.

**How it works**

Under the 1988 law, people are not supposed to build seaward of an oceanfront restriction line that runs along the beach. The line, known as the baseline, is supposed to prevent development from getting too close to the ocean.

To build farther seaward, property owners must persuade the state to move the baseline closer to the ocean or seek special permits to build past the baseline.

About four years ago, Chester County businessman Odell Steele bought an oceanfront lot at Debordieu Colony for more than $1.5 million and received DHEC’s permission to build a 3,800-square-foot beach house. The lot is on Debordieu’s southern end, where erosion is so severe that waves repeatedly hit the long seawall that protects homes. Recently, the state approved building groins to
trap sand in the area, which suffers from some of South Carolina’s highest erosion rates.

Steele said he doesn’t like regulation of his private land, but he followed the rules and got a permit. He noted, however, that property owners take a risk when they build near the beach.

“I kind of think if you have an oceanfront lot and you are dumb enough to build on it, then if the beach leaves you high and dry, it is your own fault,” he said, but noted that “I’ve got a permit from the government saying I can build there.”

Others receiving special permits to build close to the ocean include:

• Retired NASCAR driver Kyle Petty of Randleman, N.C. Petty received a permit in 2000 to rebuild a 4,000-square-foot beach house partially seaward of the baseline at Isle of Palms after a fire. He was one of several property owners at Wild Dunes receiving such permission at the time. Attempts to reach Petty were unsuccessful. Petty was allowed to rebuild the home, despite the fact that 30 feet of it was past the baseline, according to a map in DHEC’s files and an agency spreadsheet. It has since been built, agency records show. The Wild Dunes area was renourished in 2008, partially with public funds.

• Mortgage company executive Arthur Kechijian of Charlotte. Kechijian received permission in 2005 to build a two-story house at the Isle of Palms partially seaward of the baseline. The proposed home, at Wild Dunes, drew opposition from a nearby landowner and the S.C. Environmental Law project, which said the home encroached too far onto the beach. Attempts to reach Kechijian were unsuccessful. Part of the new home was to extend 20-30 feet past the baseline toward the ocean, a DHEC map shows. It has since been built, agency records show.

• USC board member Eddie Floyd of Florence. Floyd received special permission in 2002 to build a two-story house partially seaward of the baseline on Dewees Island. Floyd said he never built the house but wanted the special permit to maintain the lot’s value. Floyd, who has a beach house at Pawleys Island, said he has owned the Dewees lot for decades. His daughter, Coleman Buckhouse, served on the DHEC board that hears appeals of special permits, but she was not on the board at the time her father received the permit. The proposed home could extend about 50 feet past the baseline toward the ocean, a DHEC map shows.

• DC-CR Associates, a development group from Hilton Head Island. The limited partnership received permission in 2006 to build houses on two lots “entirely seaward” of the baseline at Daufuskie Island in Beaufort County. DHEC staff members denied special permits for the construction, saying building on a shoreline with an erosion rate of 10 feet per year was not advisable. But the DHEC board overruled its staff and granted the permits. The board said denying the permits would yield “no reasonable use” of the property. Agency maps did not
clearly show how far past the baseline the homes would be. Agency records show the homes have not yet been built. This is the same area where homeowners are seeking to improve seawalls to better protect their homes. An attorney for DC-CR declined comment.

**A new decision ahead?**

South Carolina allows special permits because legislators feared legal liability following Hurricane Hugo in 1989.

Soon after the killer storm flattened oceanfront homes from Surfside Beach to south of Charleston, a landowner brought a costly lawsuit against South Carolina. Landowner David Lucas sought to be paid because coastal regulations prevented him from building as he wished at the Isle of Palms. Lucas ultimately won his case, which reached the U.S. Supreme Court. The state was forced to pay Lucas more than $1 million for his oceanfront land.

But legal experts say the Lucas case hasn’t resulted in an expected flurry of rulings that require the government to pay for regulating property.

Columbia’s Ann Timberlake, director of the Conservation Voters of South Carolina, said most people have no idea the state allows the exemptions to build past the baseline toward the ocean.

It may be time, she said, to crack down on special permits.

The Blue Ribbon panel is expected to make recommendations to the DHEC board next year.

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As holidays go, this one will be part Thanksgiving and part Fourth of July.

Thanksgiving because two families are grateful for the kindness shown to their sons. Independence Day because both boys are now free from the heart defects that once constrained them.

Neither occasion is part of the culture in their native Uganda, but John Kananura and Kato Kimuli have much to celebrate.

They are among more than two dozen patients to have benefitted from the 10-year relationship between Pitt County Memorial Hospital and Samaritan's Purse Children's Heart Project.

John, 6, and Kato, 3, underwent life-saving, open-heart surgeries in May. John returned to his homeland late last month; Kato is set to leave by week's end. Both are expected to live normal, healthy lives.

“These children have no other options. They would not be able to find help, so they would die,” said Cindy Bonsall, director of the Children's Heart Project for Samaritan's Purse. “In our country, these kids are fixed in the first month of life or the first year of life,” she said. “In other countries, they've lived this way for years, so it's giving a child back a life they never had. ... They really don't have a life until their heart is fixed.”
Samaritan's Purse has been fixing hearts since 1997, the year the Boone-based ministry began bringing children from war-torn Kosovo to the United States for heart surgery because the hospitals in that country had been bombed. Since then, Samaritan's Purse has helped nearly 800 children from not only Kosovo but Bosnia, Honduras, Mongolia and Uganda, countries where heart surgery is not a possibility.

While physicians in those countries are capable of diagnosing heart defects, Bonsall said, it will probably be another 20 years before many of them will have the specialized equipment necessary for heart surgery.

John couldn't wait that long. Diagnosed with a hole in the bottom of his heart at age 2, he wouldn't likely survive to his 20s without treatment. He was already developing high pressure in his lungs.

Kato wasn't getting enough blood flow to the arteries of his lungs. He couldn't run a block without turning blue.

That is one reason Dr. Charlie Sang, a specialist in pediatric cardiology at the Brody School of Medicine, selected them for surgery.

“We pick the sickest ones, obviously, because if you don't they might not survive to the next round,” said Sang, who worked with Samaritan's Purse patients in Texas before bringing the program to Greenville in 2001.

“When we first started doing this people would say, ‘Well, we've got all these poor people here in your own city, your own county. Why do this for people out in the world?’” Sang recalled. “Well, people here can get resources. People in Uganda, Honduras, Nicaragua, they can't get this. ... You're supposed to help your fellow man.”

Pitt County Memorial is one of only two hospitals in the state to partner with Samaritan's Purse, founded by Franklin Graham, son of world-famous evangelist and North Carolina native Billy Graham.

Through Samaritan's Purse, about 80 children a year worldwide receive free surgeries that would range from $20,000 to $100,000 per child, depending on their diagnosis.

There are more than 200 children on a waiting list, but that list is growing.

“We're seeing hospitals that would take two children per year cut that back to one because of the current economy,” Bonsall said. “We've had a few that have had to back out where there's no funding.”

Pitt County Memorial Hospital has accepted two to four Samaritan's Purse patients for surgery nearly every year for the last decade. The only year the hospital did not bring in patients was 2010, when participating heart surgeon Dr. Ted Koutlas was serving in Afghanistan.
Koutlas, who also participates in medical missions to countries such as Nicaragua and Haiti, said he is just part of a team of medical professionals working together to help children like John and Kato.

“The heart surgeon doesn't work by himself,” he said. “I'm not the only doctor involved; everybody donates their services.”

During the 2010 fiscal year, PCMH provided more than $33.5 million in charity care. Only a portion of that was devoted to international patients.

“We are a mission-driven business,” said Barbara Batts, assistant vice president of women's services for Children's Hospital at PCMH. “There are people everywhere that are in need.”

Still, the Samaritan's Purse relationship is a special one. Pictures of the children who have been part of the project line a wall in the East Carolina Heart Institute. Years after the surgeries, local families who host the children still update physicians on their progress.

“I think Samaritan's Purse does as much for us as we are able to do for these children and their families,” Batts said. “You work in a hospital, lives are saved daily; miracles happen here daily,” she said. “But sometimes it just takes being around somebody that just doesn't have all the opportunities we have to make us just be thankful.”

As Sang said goodbye to John and Kato, he knew that he likely would never see them again. But he hopes to have two Samaritan's Purse Children's Heart Project patients from Bolivia come to the hospital for surgery this fall.

“You'll never forget being able to provide for someone you'll never see again, to make their life whole, to give them a future,” he said. “You're glowing for the rest of your life.”

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The beach comes home

North Recreation Complex set to unveil Phase II with focus on leisure activities.

BY RONNIE WOODWARD
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina’s North Recreational Complex got some attention last year because the ECU varsity soccer team played its home games at the facility.

This year, the soccer team will play in its own on-campus stadium, but David Gaskins is hoping attention will stay, if not increase, on the North Recreational Complex as it is close to finishing a $1.3 million addition that will stress leisure activities.

The Phase II project is highlighted by an Odyssey Challenge Course (ropes course), a sandy beach area, an 18-hole disc golf course and a boathouse. The project is expected to be completed in August and a ribbon-cutting ceremony will likely happen in September.

“We already have people really excited about the whole beach area,” said Gaskins, associate director of programs and marketing for East Carolina Campus Recreation and Wellness.

“This is going to be a high-profile type of facility that will hopefully encourage a lot of people to either get started or continue with some activities that they are already familiar with.”

The facility is located on Highway 264 about 10 minutes from the school’s main campus, near North Campus Crossing apartments.

The leisure portion of the complex is tailored toward East Carolina students but it will also be open to the community. The cost of the project is funded by student fees.

North Recreational Complex opened in 2008 and has been mainly used for ECU club and intramural sports, but Campus Recreation and Wellness Director Nancy Mize said Phase II is just part of an effort to expand the facility’s popularity.

The entire complex is 129 acres and a little less than half of that space will be in use when Phase II is completed.

“We’ve seen a tremendous increase in usage of that area since it opened,” Mize said. “I think as people realize it is available, it can be a tremendous asset to the community.”

Phase II also calls for sand volleyball courts, walking trails and outdoor fitness equipment, among other things. Large softball fields are expected to be built during Phase III.

Mize said her favorite aspect of Phase II is the boat and lake area. Although swimming will not be allowed in the lake, boating, kayaking and other water activities will be encouraged. Mize described the disc golf course as one of the best in the country, and the hope is that the facility will eventually host national tournaments.

Gaskins said East Carolina has developed into a trendsetter in recreational sports and the North Recreational Complex has and will continue to contribute to that reputation.

“We’re one of the small number of schools that have this type of facility available,” Gaskins said. “This will be a facility that will allow us to do a lot of things that are more park-oriented and it will bring in a whole different audience of people. It should have something for everybody.”

Contact Ronnie Woodward at rwoodward@reflector.com or 252-329-9592.
He's flat. He's purple. And he's still somewhat sandy, but a cardboard pirate is all set to engage elementary school students with tales of his summer adventures.

He's “Flat Pee Dee,” embossed with the image of East Carolina University mascot Pee Dee the Pirate. He's just returned from Florida, where his experiences were recorded for use in the classroom.

Four graduate students in ECU's College of Education sent Flat Pee Dee on his journey in a collaborative project with Rollins College in Orlando, Fla. While Pee Dee went south, Rollins mascot Tommy the Tar toured eastern North Carolina.

The exchange models the popular Flat Stanley program, in which a cardboard cutout of a young boy travels from one elementary school to another engaging students in learning about new places. ECU graduate students Stephanie Burress, Sylvia Dieu, Laura Wetherington and Beth Laughridge developed the project as part of collaborative work done in their course, Literacy in the Content Areas. The course is led by ECU faculty member Patricia Anderson in the ECU Master of Arts in Teaching program.

The students exchanged cardboard mascots with Lauren Brown, who is enrolled in a similar program at Rollins College. The mascots' adventures, photographed in detail and published online, can help teachers instruct students at any elementary grade level in multiple content areas. Teachers can adapt the materials to teach subjects from history to geography, while adjusting the content as appropriate for the children's ages.

Engaging children
Programs like these work well because children get engaged, Laughridge said. It takes them beyond just studying to pass a test. They get excited about the project because they get involved in it and, equally important, it allows them to experience places and concepts far away from their homes.
“Some of these students have never been out of their home counties,” Laughridge said.

When Flat Pee Dee travels to Sea World in Orlando, she said, the students get to experience that adventure as well. In younger grades, teachers can use the Sea World encounter to teach children about different kinds of animals. Older children can study different eco-systems or learn about animal conservation and environmental impact.

Tommy the Tar's adventures included riding a tractor, planting beans and viewing corn and tobacco fields on Dieu's family farm in Pitt County. While Florida's teachers could use this experience to teach their students about eastern North Carolina's agriculture and products, North Carolina students could learn about their home state as well, Dieu said.

“When we take the mascots on adventures, we learn things ourselves,” she said. “These tobacco fields might be right in their front yards,” Laughridge said, “But the students may not know anything at all about farming; they don't even notice it.”

The farming episode could teach students about the state's history, environment, geography and agriculture, with applications for any grade level.

Helping teachers
Dieu said their work helped show fellow classmates in the MAT program how easy and effective a project like this could be.

“We wanted to show how it can be done and how you can incorporate it into the classroom,” she said. “Kids really get into it and take ownership.”

Dieu said teachers who make friends while at ECU, then graduate and teach in different locations could share Flat Stanley projects with each other, regardless of the age level they teach. Taking part in the projects also helps teachers and students take advantage of local resources. When first asked to participate in Orlando, Brown could not think of what she might photograph for Pee Dee's visit.

“But she worked at Sea World!” Laughridge said. “It's so easy to take for granted sometimes things that are right under our noses.”

This project helps teachers think outside of the box, Dieu said.

The Flat Pee Dee project incorporated some of that kind of thinking as well. The students called it, “Flat Stanley with a twist.” The twist was technology.

They used technology to pull the project together quickly, communicating with cell phones, text messages and Facebook accounts. They used technology to present the adventures of both mascots on one web site, adding annotations on each site visited and links to more detailed information. The end result is available at http://flatstanleyandliteracy.weebly.com/.
“A Flat Stanley program is not limited,” Burress said. Teachers can adapt it as necessary for the needs of their students. She said students may use any image they choose for the cutout, even images of themselves.

“It's a great product,” Wetherington said. “Putting it online makes it even better.”

The Flat Pee Dee project was a final assignment for the four ECU students. They completed their master's degrees this summer through an intensive fast-paced course of study offered for students who have no teaching certificate upon admission. The program requirements include heavy class schedules, summer sessions and full-time internships while still taking classes in the evening.

“It's 13 months to teaching,” said Anderson.

Adding the collaboration for the Flat Pee Dee project was a bonus, she said. The ECU students worked with MAT students doing the same program at another university. They compared experiences and learned from each other.

Anderson said the mascot exchange was one of many excellent submissions in a class where students made up their own requirements. Anderson provided goals and objectives and the students came up with a proposal for the work they would do, including group, individual and technical projects.

“All the results were over the top,” Anderson said.

**Registration open for July 23 diabetes event**

John Fluegel said he'd probably be dead if not for the health care he has received from ECU's diabetes experts.

The 75-year-old lives in rural Wilson County and has had Type 2 diabetes for about 20 years.

The annual Winning with Diabetes Conference is a can't-miss event for him and his wife, Betty, who also has diabetes. Now in its 10th year, the conference will be held July 23 in the St. James United Methodist Church Family Life Center on East Sixth Street in Greenville.

“It gives me more knowledge,” Fluegel said. “They are all professionals. I've had top doctors.”

The event is a daylong self-care management program for people with diabetes and their friends and families. Participants get expert advice from doctors, nurses and nutritionists as well as encouragement and tips from people who have battled diabetes for many years. Vascular, kidney, stroke, blood pressure and foot screenings and cooking demonstrations will be held. Vendors will display diabetic products.

Cost is $25 and includes lunch. Call 744-6504 to pre-register or for more information. Space is limited.
Cancer center gets Livestrong award

The Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center has received a national award that will help cancer patients improve their lives following treatment for their disease.

The center received a Livestrong Community Impact Project Awards. The project was created by Livestrong, the organization founded by in 1997 by cancer survivor and champion cyclist Lance Armstrong to serve people affected by cancer and empower them to take action.

The cancer center will use the $4,000 award to help cancer patients transition from treatment to cancer survivorship, placing a specific emphasis on helping patients and their families have the highest quality of life after diagnosis.

Hospitals, cancer centers and community organizations in eight regions across the United States were selected to participate in an online voting campaign. During a two-week period, more than 340,000 votes were cast, and the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center was among the finalists.

“We are thrilled and honored to be named as a Community Impact Project award recipient,” said Taylor Bell, community outreach coordinator for the Carolina Well Survivorship Program at the cancer center.

“This award will go a long way in helping people in our community who are affected by cancer. We want to give special thanks to everyone who voted in support of this program. Together, we're making a difference in the lives of cancer survivors and their families.”

The Livestrong Cancer Transitions program is designed to support, educate and empower people with cancer in the transitional period after treatment is over. The program incorporates support groups, education, nutrition and exercise and addresses other medical management, psychosocial and quality-of-life issues. The program also provides survivors with practical tools and resources to form a personal action plan for survivorship beyond their participation in the program.
Dr. William F. "Bill" Grossnickle, 81, died Friday, July 1, 2011 in Greenville. The funeral service will be conducted at 11 a.m. Tuesday in Jarvis Memorial United Methodist Church. Burial will be in Pinewood Memorial Park.

Dr. Grossnickle was the son of Foster Earl Grossnickle and Blanche Dumas Grossnickle, both deceased. He was born in Passaic, N.J. in 1930, and resided in nearby Nutley until college. He received his bachelor's degree in business from Duke University in 1951. After graduation, he served in the Korean War, as a sergeant in the military police of the 2nd infantry division. After his war service, he worked for Western Electric and Blue Bell. His true interests were in education and teaching, and he soon returned to academia, attending George Washington University. He attained a master's degree in personnel administration. He subsequently earned his Ph.D., also at George Washington, in the spring of 1965. By the summer of 1965, Dr. Grossnickle was offered a faculty position in the Department of Psychology at East Carolina College in Greenville. He enjoyed the following 46 years as a dedicated professor and faculty member. In addition to his many years of teaching, he was a long standing member of the ECU faculty senate. He also chaired ECU's curriculum committee for 25 years, always willing to provide his guidance and expertise. As an ECU professor, he authored 76 papers and articles, and he chaired 87 master's theses. Dr. Grossnickle was a member of Jarvis Memorial United Methodist Church. He was an active member of the Greenville morning Rotary Club.

Dr. Grossnickle was predeceased by his first wife Betty Depp Grossnickle. Surviving are their children, Carol Anne Grossnickle of Charlotte; and Dr. Mark Earl Grossnickle of Macon, Ga; William's current wife Claire Blalock Grossnickle; and her children, Chuck Blalock, David Blalock, and Laura Blalock Smith; and together they share nine grandchildren.

Visitation will be from 6 -8 p.m. today at Wilkerson Funeral Home. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the American Cancer Society, 930-B Wellness Drive, Greenville, NC 27834 or Collide Ministries, 2213 Woodridge Drive, Winterville, NC 28590. Online condolences at www.wilkersonfuneralhome.com.

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GFWC-NC honors Five Pitt County women for contributions to state

Five Pitt County representatives were among 18 women recently honored by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs of North Carolina Inc. (GFWC-NC) for their significant contributions to the state.

Recognized were Pat Dunn, mayor of Greenville; Janice Faulkner, former secretary of state and secretary of revenue, commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles and East Carolina University professor; Marian Mclawhorn, representative in N.C. House; Susanne Sarvelle, president of the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce; and Marilyn Sheerer, provost, senior vice chancellor, academic and student affairs, East Carolina University.

The honored women are considered pioneers in their professional and community efforts serving as role models for future generations. The Women of Achievement award winners are some of the brightest leaders in government, business and nonprofits in the state. Each honoree boasts a career defined by hard work and a commitment to helping others.

Other 2011 Women of Achievement honorees are:

- Sabrina Bengal, alderman, president of tourism, managing partner of The Birthplace of Pepsi;
- Betsy Bennet, director of the N.C. Museum of Science;
- Catherine Chew, president, Craven County Community College;
- Alice Copes, community leader, teacher, volunteer, clubwoman and founder of Beaufort Chanteymen;
- Dr. Melissa Essary, dean of the Campbell University Law School;
- Dinah Gore, philanthropist and volunteer;
- Wrenn Johnson, chief of police, Morehead City;
- Pat McElraft, N.C. House of Representatives;
- Annie Moby, N.C. House of Representatives;
- Donna Preiss, founder, CEO Preiss Co.;
- Tibbie Roberts, volunteer, community activist and clubwoman;
- Linda Staunch, president of public relations firm and television personality, Pine Knoll Shores Aquarium advisory board;
- Dr. Lisa Tolnitch, founder of Pretty in Pink Foundation and Tolnitch Surgical Associates.

The WOA awards were first given by GFWC-NC in 2002. Recipients are nominated and selected by a committee and must be from or residing in North Carolina.

GFWC-NC is a nonprofit organization comprised of approximately 5,000 members across North Carolina who are committed to making their communities, the state and nation a better place to live and work.
ECU education professor receives Fulbright Award

East Carolina University education professor David J. Siegel was selected for a Fulbright Specialists project at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Siegel will present lectures and workshops during August and September, focusing on the role of access, inclusion and diversity in promoting nation building and economic development. He is an associate professor of higher, adult and counselor education at ECU.

Siegel is one of more than 400 U.S. faculty and professionals who will travel abroad this year through the Fulbright Specialists program, which supports short-term academic opportunities at postsecondary academic institutions worldwide.

The specialists program complements the 60-year-old Fulbright Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Fulbright awards have supported thousands of U.S. scholars and their counterparts from other countries in study, teaching and conducting research abroad.

For additional information about the Fulbright Specialists program, contact FULSPEC@cies.iie.org or visit www.cies.org.
Cypress Glen Executive Director Laurie Stallings presents Dr. Richard Eakin with a plaque and the symbolic key to Cypress Glen. The plaque expressed gratitude for assisting Cypress Glen during the evacuation caused by Hurricane Floyd.

**Cypress Glen ECU Club is updated on honors college**

The Daily Reflector  
Sunday, July 3, 2011

Cypress Glen residents and guests enjoyed an evening of musical entertainment and welcomed Dr. Richard Eakin as their featured speaker for the Spring ECU Club meeting. Eakin has been serving as the interim dean of the East Carolina University Honors College and the EC Scholars program since January.

“It’s the most fun I’ve had in my professional life,” he said. “Teaching and learning are some of the most exciting things to be involved in.”

Prior to his latest assignment, Eakin spent five years as a professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and one year as interim chair of the Department of Mathematics, Science, and Instructional Technology Education. He originally came to ECU as chancellor in 1987 and stayed in that position until 2001.

The Honors College opened in 2010 with 100 students and plans are to add 100 more students each year. The students accepted into the college have impressive achievements such as an average GPA of 3.7 and average SAT score of more than 1270. Full tuition scholarships of $3,300 per year are given to these students.

“In addition to obvious academic quality, we look for other things in the young people who apply,” Eakin said. “Leadership and a commitment to their community are also important. We want to see they have demonstrated leadership and are a solid citizen.”
The EC Scholars program is the “best of the best” and total 15 students. The average GPA is over 3.8 and the average SAT score is over 1300. These students receive full tuition, which includes a $10,000 scholarship and $5,000 to study abroad during the four years. These are supported by private gifts.

A number of Cypress Glen residents held teaching or faculty positions during Eakin's tenure.

Dr. Elliot Frank, on staff at ECU, performed several songs on his acoustic guitar.

The Cypress Glen ECU Club is sponsored by the East Carolina University Alumni Association and is open to all residents and their guests who have an interest in ECU.
Dodge ready for second season with Giants
By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector
Monday, July 4, 2011

There is really no point asking Matt Dodge if he's still haunted by images of DeSean Jackson's improbable last-second punt return touchdown for the Philadelphia Eagles last season.

With time expiring in a must-win game, Dodge — a rookie with the New York Giants and recent East Carolina graduate — was told by coach Tom Coughlin to punt the ball out of bounds after the Eagles had stormed back to tie the game late in the fourth quarter.

Instead, Dodge's line-drive punt bounced onto the turf between the hashmarks and was clumsily collected by Jackson, who then rambled through traffic and into the open for a touchdown that effectively derailed the Giants' season. Needless to say, Dodge made himself unforgettable to New York and Philadelphia fans that day, but the man with the big leg from Morehead City is not fazed.

“I'm so much a person that just takes each day as it comes,” said Dodge, who is preparing for his second season in the NFL and who made an appearance at last week's David Garrard Golf Classic in Greenville. “It's tough because I thought we were positioned really to make some noise.”

While players like Garrard (the veteran starting quarterback for the Jacksonville Jaguars), All-Pro Tennessee Titans running back Chris Johnson and Green Bay Packers defensive lineman C.J. Wilson are enlarging ECU's footprint in the NFL by starring in more traditional roles, Dodge might have had the most chaotic learning experience of any former Pirate in the league.

“I think I really learned this year it's whichever team stays the healthiest, and the team that gets the least amount of bad breaks,” Dodge said. “So many perfect things have to come in line to win in the NFL because there is not much that separates each team.

Everyone is paid to play.”

It wasn't all bad for Dodge in his rookie season by a long shot. When he mistakenly booted the ball to Jackson late last season, he was ranked fifth in gross punt average in the league.

“Personally, I'm a pretty resilient guy,” he said. “God has me there for a reason. Whatever it is, I'm going to figure it out and do my best. I'm looking forward to next year and mentally, I'm 100 percent ready.”
The former seventh round draft pick by the Giants booted 72 punts as a rookie, and his average of 44.8 yards ranked him ninth in the NFL by season's end.

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@reflector.com or 252-329-9595.
Pediatric critical care specialist joins Brody

Dr. Melissa Gowans, a pediatric critical care specialist, has joined the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and its group medical practice, ECU Physicians.

Gowans joined the Department of Pediatrics as a clinical assistant professor. She has a medical degree from St. George’s University School of Medicine in Grenada, West Indies.

Gowans completed residency training in pediatrics at the University of Nevada School of Medicine in Las Vegas and a pediatric critical care fellowship at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.

Gowans previously was medical director of the pediatric intensive care unit at Stormont Vail Healthcare in Topeka, Kan. She also worked as a clinical assistant professor at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City.

Gowans’ research interests include chronic respiratory failure.

She sees patients in the pediatric intensive care unit at Pitt County Memorial Hospital.
Higher education - public good or private good?

The UNC system said goodbye to two longtime leaders this week: John Bardo, chancellor of Western Carolina University for 16 years, and Rosemary DePaolo, chancellor of UNC Wilmington for eight years. Both retired June 30 after overseeing growth and change at their universities.

At Western Carolina, Bardo grew student population from 6,500 to 9,400, oversaw 14 new or renovated buildings, the acquisition of 344 acres for a public-private initiative and a substantial rise in the academic profile of incoming students. Under Bardo, WCU was an early adopter of technology and one of the first campuses in the country to require every student to have a computer.

At UNCW, DePaolo is credited with changing the atmosphere of the campus, which went from 25 percent of students living on campus to 40 percent. UNCW has climbed in an assortment of "best of" college rankings, and this year there were more than 11,400 applicants for 1,950 spots in the freshman class. The 13,000-student campus has made a name for itself outside North Carolina -- 40 percent of applicants are from out of state.

DePaolo, who plans to move to a house she owns in Canada, recently spoke about the cuts that will hit the UNC system with the budget that took effect today.

She said UNCW has had cuts of $31 million during the past few years. Across the UNC system, 1,100 courses have been eliminated, and some 9,000 may be lost in the next year, she said. "So what are we facing? We know the results -- higher class sizes, fewer classes, which means lower retention, longer time to graduation, you can predict all that."

Her bigger concern, she said, is the long-term trend of a growing disparity between public and private higher education.

"It means that only the people who can afford to pay for private education will get a quality education," she said. "That's what worries me, that that's the road we're headed down."

DePaolo said she hoped that people in North Carolina would continue to value education as a public good.

"We have public education in North Carolina that is comparable to the best private education," she said. "We've always prided ourselves on that. That's not the case in most states, but it is here. And that's in jeopardy."
Public colleges tap private funds as state support dwindles

By Daniel de Vise

As state subsidies for higher education are dwindling, public colleges in the Washington region and elsewhere are learning they must tap private funds to survive.

Fundraising by George Mason University rose from $3 million in 1990 to $32 million in 2010, according to an industry survey by the Council for Aid to Education. After adjusting for inflation, that amounts to a nearly four-fold increase.

The survey showed donations to the University of Maryland Baltimore County surged from about $1 million to $8 million in that span. Towson University’s fundraising climbed from $1 million to $6 million.

Such fundraising campaigns, echoed in other states, come as legislatures across the nation are cutting higher education budgets.

Per-student state funding has dwindled from $8,035 in 2000 to $6,451 in 2010 nationwide, in inflation-adjusted dollars, according to the State Higher Education Executive Officers.

The trend has spawned dark humor. Public colleges, some in the field say, have evolved from state-supported to state-assisted to state-located.

“We are at, in the current fiscal year, the lowest funding level in 30 years. And it’s clearly going to get worse,” said Dan Hurley, director of state relations and policy analysis at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Young, ambitious state institutions such as George Mason are playing a desperate game of catch-up against an elite group of older universities with billion-dollar endowments and a long tradition of giving. Johns Hopkins University, Georgetown University and the University of Virginia each raise hundreds of millions of dollars a year. Even the flagship University of Maryland, a relative upstart, took in $87 million in fiscal year 2010.

Legislatures are shifting the cost of college to students: public university tuition has nearly doubled nationwide in the past decade.
Most public colleges have relied on state funding and student tuition for nearly all their revenue. Now, they are looking to build other funding sources, turning to private donors with unprecedented vigor.

Flagship public universities are insulated against the state funding losses, partly on the strength of massive fundraising operations. Even before the decline in state funding, the University of Virginia drew only one quarter of its revenue from Richmond.

Other state institutions are more vulnerable. State cuts drove Virginia Commonwealth University to an unprecedented 24 percent tuition increase in 2010. George Mason hasn’t raised faculty salaries in three years. Around the region, state universities are hiring fewer tenure-track professors, allowing class sizes to grow and pressing student lounges into use as teaching spaces.

George Mason, a onetime U-Va. branch campus that gained independence in 1972, relied on the state for 60 percent of its operating budget as recently as a decade ago. Today, that share has fallen below 30 percent. Per-student state funding has dropped from $5,319 in 2001 to $3,238 in 2011, in constant dollars.

Twenty years ago, “fundraising in any aggressive way was simply not on the radar screen” of regional state universities and younger research universities, said Gary Rubin, vice president for university advancement at Towson.

The typical college raises private dollars largely from a small group of wealthy and older alumni. Plaques on ancient campus buildings bespeak the tradition of giving.

But up-and-coming state colleges have no tradition to tap. The average George Mason graduate is 42, and few are over 60. Half of the alumni of UMBC, founded in 1966, graduated in the past 15 years. Towson and James Madison transformed from small teacher colleges into comprehensive state universities in the 1960s. None of the schools have much experience with university-wide fundraising campaigns.

Younger alumni are often eager to give. But most of them are not yet in their prime giving years.

“We’re really young, and our alumni are really young,” said Lisa Akchin, associate vice president of UMBC.

Fundraisers have been forced to find ways to connect with youthful alumni.
When George Mason officials set about building up their fundraising operation four years ago, they realized they had never held an alumni weekend. They pitched the annual event to an audience of 30-somethings and young parents, with a craftsman beer-tasting table and a face-painting booth.

Fundraisers have learned to communicate with younger alumni via personal e-mail rather than form letter, and by cellphone instead of land line. George Mason and VCU have parlayed NCAA basketball tournament success into donations; George Mason alumni are reminded to give by announcers at games.

It’s not hard to sell young alumni on contributing to their ascendent university.

“This is a place where new ideas, good ideas, all get heard, get listened to, get acted upon,” said Jimmy Hazel, a 1984 George Mason law graduate who is active in fundraising.

Despite dramatic fundraising gains, younger state universities still lag behind some more-established schools in alumni giving. George Mason raised about $1 million a year from its alumni in fiscal 2010 and about $31 million from other sources, chiefly corporations, according to the industry survey. U-Va. raised $48 million from alumni and nearly $200 million from all private donors.

Fundraising is accelerating at public colleges nationwide in response to dwindling state revenues.

Two or three decades ago, public flagship universities lagged behind private national universities in fundraising, according to John Lippincott, president of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. Their leaders counted on generous state subsidies, and most alumni assumed their alma maters could get along without private support.

“I’d say the public regional institutions are now trying to catch up with the public research institutions, which have demonstrated that they can be as successful as the private institutions,” Lippincott said.

The University of Mary Washington, a onetime public women’s college that split off from U-Va. in 1972, is about to embark on a $50 million capital campaign, the second in its history.
In the school’s brief lifetime, the share of its revenues coming from the state has slipped from more than 80 percent to about 20 percent.

“This will be a stretch for us, to try to raise $10 million a year,” said Torre Meringolo, vice president for advancement. “But I think we can make a case for it.”

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