THE DAILY CLIPS

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PCMH plans strategy for area’s health

Trustees hope to lower rates of heart disease and cancer, the leading causes of death in Pitt County.

BY TOM MARINE
The Daily Reflector

Heart disease and cancer continue to be leading causes of death for Pitt County residents, and increasing awareness about risk factors, prevention, signs and symptoms is one way to address these concerns, Jo Morgan told the Pitt County Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees on Tuesday at their monthly meeting.

Morgan, Pitt County Health Department’s education director, presented board members with the Pitt County Community Health Assessment — a report conducted every four years to examine the health status of the county in order to determine the health priorities of the community.

According to the assessment, the health priorities for the next four years are heart disease and stroke, diabetes, cancer, older adult health, substance abuse, nutrition and physical therapy, injury prevention, infant mortality and communicable diseases.

“It helps give focus to some areas that we can work toward improving,” she said. “Hopefully, we will see fewer people dying from these diseases and an improved quality of life.”

Amy Jones, director of the office of patient and family experience at PCMH, followed Morgan’s presentation by providing information about patient-and family-centered care, a concept that views the patient and family as partners in health care.

By embracing partnerships with both patients and their families, Jones said, hospitals will lower morbidity and mortality rates, improve patient and staff satisfaction and reduce costs.

“We have a long way to go,” Jones said, referring to the hospital. “But I do think we are on the right track.”

Financially, June was another strong month for PCMH, its sixth consecutive month that operating income exceeded its target.

The hospital earned $4.3 million on operations last month, according to the president’s report, about $1.5 million more than expected.

“After three quarters of activity, the hospital’s year-to-date income from operations is $24.7 million, which is above both plan and the prior year by $4.6 and $11.8 million respectively,” according to the report.

Also at Tuesday’s board meeting:

Dr. Ron Perkins, medical director of Children’s Hospital, gave a presentation on plans for the new Children’s Hospital and detailed the need to expand health services for the children of eastern North Carolina. To close his presentation, Perkins showed board members images and designs of the inside and outside of the new Children’s

PCMH

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Hospital facility.

Dr. Phyllis Horns, interim Chancellor for Health Sciences and interim dean of the Brody School of Medicine, informed the board about hiring Dr. Paul R.G. Cunningham as the new dean of the medical school. She said the search for the dean of the new dental school continues, although the process could be complete in four to six weeks.

Contact Tom Marine at tmarine@coxnc.com and 329-9567
Board member arrested in probe

ABC law enforcement announced Tuesday that an investigation into illegal video poker machines resulted in the arrest of Pitt County school board member Billy Ray Peaden.

BY MICHAEL ABRAMOWITZ
The Daily Reflector

A six-month investigation into illegal video poker machine operation has resulted in the arrest of Pitt County school board member and hospital trustee Billy Ray Peaden, Alcoholic Beverage Control Law Enforcement Chief Calvin Craft announced Tuesday.

Peaden, who operates stores in the Greenville, Belvoir and Farmville areas, was charged Saturday with one felony count of machines/devices prohibited by state law, Craft said on Tuesday. The state ABC officers conducted the investigation with the Pitt County Sheriff’s Office.

Nine video poker machines, illegal in the state since the General Assembly outlawed them in July 2007, were seized on search warrants at four locations owned and operated by Peaden, Craft said.

PEADEN

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Peaden would not comment on the case. He referred questions to his attorney, Mark Owens Jr. Owens did not return a phone call. A school system spokeswoman declined comment, and a Pitt County Memorial Hospital spokeswoman did not return a call.

The stores included Peaden’s Inc., 4206 N.C. 33 West; Peaden Brothers Seed Company, 729 Porter Road; Ballards Crossroads Grill, 6010 U.S. 13, Farmville; and Peaden’s Grill No. 4, 1500 S.W. Greenville Blvd., Craft said.

The investigation led to the seizure of 11 more machines at several other locations throughout the county, Craft said.

During the investigation, officers also seized two stolen guns at the N.C. 33 West store, as well as marijuana packaged for sale by one of his employees, Craft said.

Peaden was charged with two felony counts of possession of stolen firearms.

He also was charged with one misdemeanor count of possession of pyrotechnics because illegal fireworks were found at the store, Craft said.

Officials believe one of the machines seized at Peaden’s Grill No. 4 was owned by Carson Dail of Dail Music Company. In addition to a misdemeanor charge against Dail, misdemeanor charges also are pending against William Brooks Eakes of Tarheel Amusements Inc., and Jerry Rhodes of Jerry’s Music and Games of Bethel for their suspected involvement with the machines, Craft said.

Peaden was released from the Pitt County Detention Center on a $45,000 unsecured bond.

Michael Abramowitz can be reached at 329-9571 and mabramowitz@coxnc.com.
ECU leader in online education

I read with interest the article in the July 10 business section about the increased interest in online classes spurred by higher gas prices. ECU has been the leader in North Carolina for online education for many years. Every college at ECU offers multiple courses and degrees online. We provide more than 60 percent of the online courses in the entire UNC system and ECU has more than 5,000 graduate and undergraduate students taking online courses.

At the College of Business, in addition to our 2,600 traditional face-to-face students, we have more than 450 graduate students and 400 undergraduate students taking courses entirely online. They live (and work) all around our state and country.

While online education is not for everyone or for every degree, it is clearly a way to make high-quality courses and programs available to people who cannot get an education in the traditional manner — whether it is because of time, proximity or, more recently, gas prices.

FREDERICK NISWANDER
Dean, College of Business
East Carolina University
Duke University to test new alarm system

FROM STAFF REPORTS.

DURHAM - Duke University will begin testing its new emergency alarm system this week.

A series of alarms will sound today between 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. and for much of the day Thursday as Duke officials work out the kinks in a new campus emergency notification system, part of the institution's reaction to last year's shootings at Virginia Tech.

Campus officials at Duke and universities across the nation have scrambled in the last year to update and improve the way they notify students and staff in emergencies.

At Duke this week, sirens will sound intermittently, and people on campus and in surrounding neighborhoods may hear loud tones and live or recorded messages.
Meredith to offer master's in teaching

FROM STAFF REPORTS

RALEIGH — Meredith College will launch a new master's degree in teaching this fall.

The new program is open to men and women who have earned bachelor's degrees but do not have a teaching license. Students can choose a full-time track that lasts 15 months, or a part-time schedule that requires one additional year. Students can choose between two concentrations — elementary education and special education.

For someone who has never taught, the program offers the opportunity both to study at the graduate level and to earn a beginning teacher's license. Earning a relevant master's degree qualifies a beginning teacher for a higher pay grade.

For more information, go to www.meredith.edu/graduate/met/ or call 760-8316.
Arctic lakes show warming

UNC/ research studies melting permafrost

BY WADE RAWLINS

TOOLIK LAKE, Alaska — Scientist Anne Hershey paddled a small inflatable raft across an Arctic lake, pausing in her stroke to consider how the melting permafrost caused a landslide of mud and sediment spilling down the bank into the water.

Since the bank collapsed two years ago, the water has grown cloudy with sediment, providing scientists a natural laboratory for studying how warmer temperatures may play out in ecosystems far and near.

Global air and water temperatures are inching up, causing seas to warm and expand, and polar ice to melt. Alaska is warming more quickly than lower latitudes of the United States, so scientists can observe changes from global warming here first. The average annual temperature in Arctic Alaska has increased about 4 degrees Fahrenheit in 50 years, according to the Alaska Climate Research Center.

Hershey, an aquatic ecologist at UNC-Greensboro, heads a team of researchers who are studying Arctic lakes and how the surrounding landscapes affect what lives in them. Increasingly, a focus of their research is the effects of climate change.

"As time has gone on, it's become more and more important," Hershey said. "The Arctic is very sensitive to climate change. We're experiencing that."

Hershey, 55, has spent parts of nearly every summer at Toolik Field Station in northern Alaska since she was a graduate student at N.C. State University in the late 1970s.

Toolik — its name is the Eskimo word for "loon," the water bird whose tremulous cries provides a summer evening soundtrack — houses scientists trying to develop a blueprint of the Arctic ecosystem. A hodgepodge of large tents and drab-green laboratory trailers sits beside the research outpost about 150 miles south of the Arctic Ocean.

The surrounding grassy tundra is pocked with thousands of pristine glacial lakes undisturbed by development and beyond the reach of roads. As a result, the lakes are accessible only by foot or aircraft such as a helicopter.

Such unspoiled ecosystems are ideal laboratories for Hershey and other scientists.

"We can really understand basic science because the lakes are not affected by many aspects of human activity," said Hershey, who has studied about 200 lakes in the region.

One of the things researchers might expect to see is that the sediment from the collapsing lake banks could add more organic matter to the lakes. That would affect what grows in them, including algae and the creatures that feed on algae. So far, Hershey said, they haven't observed that, but they're still studying it.

"It could be the lakes are changing as a result of climate change, but not in ways that were expected," Hershey said.

'That's science'

While Hershey collected water samples from different depths of the lake for analysis, graduate student Matt Bostick of Greensboro lowered a heavy steel tube into a different part of the lake to collect cores of sediment.

Bostick, 27, is comparing differences in methane gas levels between undisturbed Arctic lakes and lakes where melting permafrost is dumping extra organic matter from decomposed plants.

Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas, more than 20 times as potent at trapping heat in the atmosphere as carbon dioxide. Any methane that is not consumed by microorganisms in the lake would go up in the atmosphere and contribute to climate change.

"The thermokars are getting bigger in the lakes," Bostick said, referring to the phenomenon of collapsing banks along rivers and lakes. "This is something I can see. It seems to be such a rapid process."

Hershey said it appears that methane is becoming a more important part of the diet of bacteria and animals that eat bacteria in the lakes, but they're studying how climate change is contributing.

"That's science," Hershey said. "That's what we're doing up here, trying to find answers to these questions."

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