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ECU assistant steps down
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, July 28, 2010

East Carolina assistant football coach Mark Nelson, who joined Ruffin McNeill’s initial staff in February, has stepped down from his position according to announcement from director of athletics Terry Holland Tuesday night.

Nelson, who served as the Pirates’ defensive ends coach and special teams coordinator, and McNeill agreed to the decision after possible NCAA violations were uncovered regarding the illegal observation of voluntary summer workouts.

“I notified Coach McNeill late this afternoon that our compliance office had been investigating concerns about violations of NCAA rules involving out-of-season practice - specifically a coach evaluating players during normal summer activities that were supposed to be strictly voluntary,” Holland said. “When a coach observes these normal activities, the NCAA considers the activities to be non-sanctioned out-of-season practice.

“Coach McNeill called the coach in and they discussed these possible violations,” he added.

“That coach, Mark Nelson, admitted to violations which are likely to be secondary violations when a formal report is filed with the NCAA. Coach Nelson and Coach McNeill agreed that these violations would be a distraction to the team at this critical time of the year and Coach Nelson offered to step down from his position. His offer to step down was accepted by Coach McNeill pending negotiation of a severance agreement with the athletic administration and the university.

“The ECU Compliance Office will file a formal report of the violations and cooperate fully with the NCAA,” Holland said.

Nelson, who brought a combined 23 years of professional and collegiate experience to the Pirate program, most recently served as defensive coordinator and linebackers coach for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers of the Canadian Football League during the 2009 campaign. Among his 17 seasons of collegiate experience were earlier tenures in the Southeastern Conference, Big 12 Conference, Big East Conference and Conference USA.

Prior to rejoining the CFL, a league in which he coached a total of six seasons, Nelson was Louisville’s special teams coordinator in 2007 and 2008 after spending one year at Tulsa as co-defensive coordinator and defensive line coach.

He came to the Golden Hurricane from Baylor, where he spent the previous three campaigns as special teams coordinator and a defensive coach who guided the linebackers for two seasons and defensive ends in 2003.

“This is certainly an unfortunate development, but integrity will be the foundation of our program,” McNeill said. “We are going to comply with the spirit and letter of NCAA rules at East Carolina. I expect my players to do the right thing, and as leaders, and I demand my coaches to do the same. As head football coach, failure to comply with NCAA rules will not be tolerated.”

McNeill also indicated that he will begin a search for a new coach immediately and will also consider staff reorganization depending on who is available.

East Carolina’s preseason camp will begin August 5 with the arrival of its 105-man roster. The Pirates will follow by facing Tulsa in their season opener Sunday, Sept. 5.

—ECU Media Relations
Public Forum
Letter: Chancellor's home a fine tradition
Wednesday, July 28, 2010

I agree with the July 22 editorial to renovate the chancellor's home. Everything the paper said is correct. However, it is common knowledge that this chancellor and his wife have never liked the residence and its location. It is reported that they like their residence in Washington much better. Well, they took the job and it came with this beautiful home, which is unique, well located and able to hold large parties in a single night. My husband and I attended many large functions when the Eakins were happily located there and no one ever felt uncomfortable or crushed. On the contrary, everything was fabulous. This isn't the time to casually waste money because one chancellor in one term doesn't like this fabulous home. Maybe this home will indeed appeal to the next chancellor and his wife and not a more modern home located farther from the students he is there to serve. Also, how can they seriously say they are afraid in any way of the neighborhood in which our students live. What a message to send to their parents. I have nothing against this chancellor and this is not personal. It is a matter of common sense and fiscal responsibility, as well as a matter of fine tradition where the chancellor lives among his students.

ILENE COX
Greenville
Two local couples say hosting French teens a great experience

By Brandon Sneed
StarNews correspondent

Published: Tuesday, July 27, 2010 at 9:23 a.m.

Two area couples shouldered the cause of hosting foreign exchange students this summer for Terra Lingua/Terre des Langues, or TLTL, after reading about the organization's need for host families in the StarNews in May.

Richard Trask and Karen Holbrook, a retired married couple from Southport, and Gary and Mary Ann Mintier, a retired couple from Hampstead, have been hosting Paul Chavrier and Marc Mairot, respectively, since they arrived in North Carolina on June 18. Both students are from France. Paul is 16 and Marc is 15.

"Both families are great fits and very interesting couples," said Frederic Fladenmuller, an East Carolina University professor of French and Spanish who heads up TLTL. For the past 25 years, Fladenmuller has brought 3,500 French and Spanish students to North Carolina and enabled 500 American teens to travel abroad as part of the program.

He added of the two couples, "They both travel and are able to provide a great overall opportunity and experience for the students. They're both interested in different cultures, and it was a wonderful way to express gratitude to other cultures, by hosting. They are both very enthusiastic."

Holbrook and Trask are retired professors. Holbrook taught psychology and Trask taught English at Frostberg State University in western Maryland.

Holbrook said they've been traveling all around the country with Paul, having ventured by Amtrak to Wilmington, Del., Cumberland, Md. and Washington, D.C. In Delaware, they toured the DuPont mansions, and in Cumberland they took in some small-town America lifestyles, watching a Fourth of July soapbox derby.

"He gets along really well with other people," Holbrook said of Paul. "He's a really nice kid."

Paul has also gone kayaking and has been teaching tennis lessons through the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department. He's also gone on several bike rides with his host parents.

"It's been a real benefit to have a teenager living with us again," said Holbrook, the mother of two grown children. "It really showed the universality of teenagers. He likes Facebook and action movies and shopping for teenage type clothes. It's
Two local couples say hosting French teens a great experience | St...

broadened our horizons, too, I think.”

The Mintiers are also retired, Gary from working as the director of computer systems for the New York Stock Exchange, and Mary Ann from working as the vice president of sales for an automobile company. They’ve hosted exchange students before on their own, but decided to get involved with TLTL after reading a StarNews feature about it.

“It’s been great to provide the opportunity for him to be here,” said Gary, “to better his English, and to meet some people his own age living in America.”

Marc hails from southwestern France, beside the Atlantic Ocean, and enjoys surfing. He’s gone surfing with some of the Mintiers’ neighbors. He’s also traveling to Williamsburg, Va., with the Mintiers this week, and has gone canoeing with them on a creek near Hampstead. Recently, he’s enjoyed following the Tour de France with his host parents as well.

For details about the TLTL program, reach Fladenmuller at 252-754-2136, fladenmuller@ecu.edu, or visit TLTLhost.com.

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State's elusive moon rock soon to become a big star

By Jay Price
Staff Writer

RALEIGH - It is the hardest proof of a peak of human achievement, far rarer than any gem and maybe worth $5 million or more.

It's also a drab little black pebble encased in a plastic ball and glued to a slightly kitschy early 1970s plaque. Which might help explain how the state's official moon rock ended up in a desk drawer at the Department of Commerce, then spent the past seven years in the custody of an N.C. State University professor who took it on occasional visits to school groups.

No longer. On Tuesday, the professor, Christopher Brown, brought the rock and other artifacts that it came with to the state Museum of Natural Sciences, where it is expected to go on display in a major new wing called the Nature Research Center when it opens in the fall of 2011.

SEE ROCK, PAGE 10A

NCSU professor Christopher Brown holds the long-neglected moon rock.

PHOTO BY MICK KULIKOWSKI - NCSU
ROCK
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

"I've shown it to, who knows, hundreds of people," Brown told museum officials after handing over the rock. "You'll show it to thousands every day."

Joseph Gutheinz, a retired NASA investigator who since 2002 has led an informal project to locate the 370 or so lunar samples given to the states and other countries, said he was overjoyed to hear that North Carolina's had surfaced. But, he added, the museum needs to be careful.

A host of moon rocks have been stolen, from NASA itself in several cases, and a few have apparently traded hands for millions of dollars.

Some are now displayed under bulletproof glass with video cameras trained on them and guards nearby, said Gutheinz, a Houston lawyer who teaches classes in investigative techniques at the University of Phoenix, who over the years has assigned about 1,000 students to help locate the rocks.

"When people know where this moon rock is, it will become a target," Gutheinz said. "You want it on display, you want it shown. But if they don't create a secure display, it's like a bundle of money just sitting out there, and someone will make a play for it."

He said his students have often been shocked by how casually some foreign and state officials have treated the "goodwill rocks." One was found in a shoebox, others have been placed in drawers, dictators stole at least two and Ireland's was thrown away after a fire.

North Carolina's rock

North Carolina received its moon rock in 1973 after it was brought back on Apollo 17, the last of six manned lunar missions. It came with two tiny state flags that had made the trip, a mission patch and a handwritten note signed by the three astronauts on the mission: Eugene A. Cernan, Ronald E. Evans and Harrison H. Schmitt.

The faded note, mounted behind glass, reads "Presented to the people of the great state of North Carolina, James E. Holshouser, Governor, with deep appreciation of your past and sincere best wishes for your future."

It's unclear what happened after that, Brown said. In 2003, though, a colleague of his took a new post at the state Commerce Department and found the plaque with the now-unglued rock and the letter when he opened the drawers of his new desk.

He asked permission to lend them to Brown, an associate vice chancellor and director of the N.C. Space Grant, a consortium of 11 universities and the community college system that, among other things, awards NASA-funded scholarships.

WHERE THE ROCKS CAME FROM

Moon rocks and soil were collected during six Apollo missions, beginning with Apollo 11, which landed on the moon July 20, 1969, and ending with Apollo 17 in December 1972. Apollo 13 orbited the moon but failed to land because of mechanical problems.

Brown often makes presentations on space and space-related science.

Brown said Tuesday that he was happy to be able to use the rock temporarily, but always knew it needed a better, permanent home. While helping plan the new museum wing, he told museum officials about it and suggested that it be displayed there with space-related material, including the museum's growing collection of meteors.

We have space dust, too

Astronauts brought back 842 pounds of moon rock, said Robert Pearlman of the website www.collectspace.com, which is popular with space buffs. Most of it was set aside for study.

Dust and tiny fragments from Apollo 11, though, were sent to all 50 states and more than 100 countries. North Carolina's lunar sample from that mission — so small that geologists wouldn't call it rocks, Pearlman said — is in the Museum of History.

A second round of gifts to the states and countries, from the Apollo 17 mission, was different. All were taken from a single large rock that was dated at 3.9 billion years. Each sample weighs exactly 1.142 grams, about the same as a paper clip. The plastic balls they are embedded in not only protect them but magnify them so they look about the size of the tip of a man's little finger.

In recent years there have been shady deals involving moon rocks. In one case, a U.S. businessman apparently bought Honduras' rock from a military leader there and then tried to sell it for $5 million to NASA investigators, one of them Gutheinz, posing as private buyers.

That brought the goodwill rocks to the attention of Pearlman, who now works with Gutheinz to keep a list of their locations on his website, with blanks for those that are unconfirmed.

Thefts and the growing realization of the value of the rocks are leading some states to pull theirs off exhibition, Pearlman said.

Gutheinz said that despite the risks and costs, it's crucial that states share the rocks with the public.

"What you're seeing there is a fragment of the dream that [John F.] Kennedy had, of going to the moon and making a truly American kind of accomplishment," he said.

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