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Greenville's growth inspires CNN visit

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, September 03, 2009

Greenville's growth in the midst of economic recession and a family connection brought CNN staff to town Thursday.

Reporter Sara Lane is composing a story comparing the city to Asheboro for the broadcast network's "Your $$$$$ (Money)" show. She said the locations are similar because they were once largely dependent either on tobacco or manufacturing industries, both of which have declined over the years.

"We knew we wanted to talk about Asheboro," Lane said, "But we needed another city to compare it to ... one that's had more success."

Lane knows North Carolina well. Now based out of New York, she grew up in Yanceyville and attended N.C. State University. She said Raleigh was just too big, but had another town in mind.

"My brother recently graduated from ECU," she said. "Greenville has been successful in finding something to keep going and growing even."

She refers to, of course, to the growth of East Carolina University and Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

"Asheboro's not quite there yet," she added. "It's the right story, but it helped that I have the personal connection."

Lane and photojournalist William Walker arrived in Greenville at 9 a.m., and began by interviewing the dean of ECU's College of Business, Rick Niswander. They followed that with an interview and lunch at Uncle Yammy’s Rib Shack on Red Banks Road. The latter recommendation came from her brother, she said, who works at the neighboring Moe’s Southwest Grill.

"(Uncle Yammy) opened a business in the middle of a recession," Lane noted, also mentioning that lunch was delicious.

Their final interview of the day came just before 2 p.m., downtown, with The Daily Reflector's Editorial Page Editor Brian Colligan.

Lane said she had hoped the interviews would indicate how Greenville has grown, the role of ECU and PCMH in that growth and what it's like to run a business in Greenville during this economic climate. And she wanted to learn all of it without talking to the mayor, city manager or city council members.

"We're trying to get the unofficial perspective," Lane said.

"Your $$$$$" airs at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. on Saturdays. Lane said she is unsure when the piece involving Greenville will air.

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9566.

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Time to paint it purple and gold

By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, September 03, 2009

Anticipation for East Carolina’s football season opener against Appalachian State is at a level unrealized in years, according to officials from both schools.

When the Mountaineers and Pirates crack pads for the first time since 1979 on Saturday, they will do so in front of a sold-out crowd at Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium. Tickets were snatched up in hours at both schools, officials said, but calls and e-mails about availability continue to pour in.

Sellers on some online ticket auctioning sites are asking as much as $150 per ticket for a chance to see the rivalry renewed between the old North State and Southern Conference foes.

And they aren’t the only ones hoping to cash in.

Debbie Vargas, CEO of the Greenville-Pitt County Convention & Visitors Bureau, said local businesses are also hoping the influx of people for Saturday’s game will spike sales that have been slumping during tough economic times.

Vargas says the game is expected to bring in about $2.95 million to the local economy. While that would be a shot in the arm for businesses, Vargas said it is still lower than officials would normally project for a sold-out game between in-state rivals.

“I can’t help but wonder if that is just because of the state of the economy right now,” Vargas said.

Vargas said fewer hotel rooms have been booked for the weekend than officials usually expect during football season. She attributes that to a noon start time, but notes that officials are optimistic some people might have a change of heart when they get here.

“What it seems like might be happening is that although the attendance is going to be excellent for the game, a lot of people who might have come in and stayed in hotels in the past may just be driving back,” Vargas said. “But what we are hoping is that once people get here and get wrapped up in the excitement of the game and seeing people they haven’t seen in a long time that they might be convinced to go ahead and get a hotel room after all.”

Greenville has about 100 more hotel rooms to offer than it did last football season, Vargas said.

Mixed emotions

As with many in-state contests, Saturday’s game is stirring a myriad of emotions for people with ties to both sides.

Ann Bullock, associate professor in the ECU College of Education, is among them.

Bullock, who has taught at ECU for 14 years, is an Appalachian State graduate who says she has a place in her heart for both sides. She will likely have to hide any purple-and-gold allegiances, however, as she will be sitting with her father Gerald Adams, a former Mountaineer football player and current president of the university’s Yosef Club.

“She better be pulling for us because I’m the one who got her the tickets,” Adams said.
Adams said an Appalachian State victory over nationally-ranked Michigan two years ago and three consecutive Football Championship Subdivision titles (2005-07) have rejuvenated the Mountaineer fan base. He said adding an in-state rival such as East Carolina fuels fan enthusiasm.

"Everyone I have talked to thinks it is a great idea to get the rivalry going again," Adams said. "I mean if you are under 30 or 35 years old, you might not have any idea that the two schools ever played one another."

For Charlotte accountant Greg Byers, Saturday's game is one he has had circled on his calendar.

Byers, 24, an Appalachian State graduate, grew up in Greenville and attended East Carolina football games most of his life, including one season he spent as a ball boy for the team. He said the two programs have a lot of similarities and ECU should be commended for scheduling an FCS opponent.

"I feel like in a lot of ways ECU and Appalachian State are in the same boat," Byers said. "We don't get respect from a lot of the (Football Bowl Subdivision) schools. It is similar for ECU in that they don't get the type of respect they might deserve from some of the BCS conferences like the ACC or Big East. I kind of look at this game as a middle child and a youngest child getting in a fight."

Future of rivalry

When you hear ECU Director of Athletics Terry Holland talk about the scheduling of Appalachian State, you don't get the impression that it will be another 30 years before the teams meet again.

Contacted by e-mail Thursday, Holland said the Appalachian State game was scheduled because the Pirates needed to balance their home and away match-ups and ASU fit the profile to develop a regional rivalry within driving distance.

"The fans of both institutions have enthusiastically embraced the game as a healthy rivalry for both teams, so we will be looking for openings on future schedules to promote this rebirth of a special in-state rivalry," Holland wrote.

Holland said Appalachian State's location in Boone and its large alumni base in Charlotte could lend itself to the rivalry being played in the future at Charlotte's Bank of America Stadium.

Appalachian State holds a 19-10 edge in the all-time series between the two schools.

Contact Brock Letchworth at bletchworth@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9574.
Universities, community hope to cash in on game excitement

BY BROCK LETCHWORTH
The Daily Reflector

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FREEBOOT FRIDAY: Pirate fans kick off football season with family-friendly fun in downtown Greenville.

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See PURPLE, A7
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Contact Brock Letchworth at bletchworth@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9574.
Police prepared, policies clarified for ECU security

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, September 03, 2009

Pirate football fans who rush the field after home games this year in violation of the law and Conference USA rules will be videotaped and prosecuted, ECU police officials said this week.

Officials don't expect fans to rush the field after games this year, but are watchful and prepared with new security policies and procedures if they do, Major Frank Knight said.

After fans rushed the field following a Sept. 6, 2008, football game against West Virginia, charges of police brutality surfaced when some unofficial video footage showed confrontations between fans and law enforcement officers.

East Carolina University police are not expecting a similar incident this season, but rules have been clarified this year, and policy and procedural changes have been made to have officers better prepared to handle a similar incident, should one occur, Major Frank Knight said.

"I'm confident that we've prepared well for the season, but there is always the unknown. No matter what you plan for, something can go awry and you always have to be able to adjust in the moment," Knight said.

One of the changes has Pirate Club fans seated in the lower sections of the stadium, particularly in the north section, Knight said. Other students and general fans will be either in the upper deck or the upper sections of the lower deck, he said.

"We feel the Pirate Club members are more disciplined and we will likely have less problems with them," Knight said.

The law allows for a fine up to $10,000 against anyone who runs onto the field, Knight said. Also, Conference USA rules allow for possible forfeiture of the game and home-field advantage in playoff games, especially if any officials, coaches or players get injured by a fan, he said.

Officers' first priority will be to protect those people if fans rush the field, Knight said.

New digital cameras have been placed around the stadium to record unlawful activities, he said. Any students viewed violating the law will be prosecuted through the appropriate university administrative procedures, and non-student violators will be prosecuted through the off-campus legal system.

"We want the fans to enjoy themselves and be safe while they do," Knight said. "We realize that when most fans run on the field, it's just exuberant celebration, but there are some who go on the field to vandalize or attack opposing players or their coaches. It's that small group of individuals that we have to protect people from. When you have 2,000-3,000 fans rushing onto the field, it's hard to tell those who are just there to celebrate from those who want to hurt somebody."

One of the issues that concerned ECU administrators last year was the use of agencies and officers whose unfamiliarity with local officers and their procedures might have contributed to the confusion, Knight said.

For the rest of the 2008 season, ECU police worked only with Greenville police, Pitt County Memorial Hospital police, Pitt Community College officers and State Highway Patrol troopers (working outside the stadium only) for support. Those agencies work regularly with ECU police through mutual aid agreements and are more familiar
with each other, Knight said.

The department also consulted an outside agency, the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security at the University of Southern Mississippi, for advice and suggestions, he said.

"One of the ideas we are adopting is the use of hand-held metal detectors to screen people at the gates," Knight said.

In the past, police used volunteers to take tickets. This year they have contracted with Event One for use of their professionally trained staff around the perimeter, at the gates and as ushers.

"If they notice any rowdy or disruptive behavior they will notify law enforcement personnel who will respond to each situation," Knight said.

New technological developments are expected to improve security at games this year. The VIPR 800 MHz interoperable communications system used by city and county emergency services will allow instant communications among all the individual agencies working game security, without the need for a central dispatcher, Knight said.

"We used to have four or five different radios tied into a command post, but that is no longer needed," Knight said.

Law enforcement, security staff and representatives of university athletic services have been meeting regularly to prepare.

They review a variety of security policies and procedures along with related issues of game day activities, including game time procedures, trademark violations in the parking lots, emergency evacuations and the possibility of fans rushing to the field.

Pre- and post-game briefings will evaluate what went right and what improvements need to take place for the next game, Knight said.

The law enforcement agencies also bring in a group of 40-50 people, including university athletics, contracted services, concessionaires, grounds keepers, chancellor's staff and a representative of ECU's handicapped population, for a roundtable discussion of the day's issues and concerns, Knight said.

Officials are circulating information to students and fans about rules and policies guiding conduct through a variety of outlets, Knight said.

Contact Michael Abramowitz at mabramowitz@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9571.
Ready to Freeboot Friday?

By Kelley Kirk  
The Daily Reflector  

Friday, September 04, 2009  

Before the much-anticipated and sold-out East Carolina University football game Saturday against Appalachian State, Pirate fans can get an early start with Uptown Greenville’s Freeboot Friday from 5-8 p.m. today.

Held at Five Points Plaza, at the corner of Evans and Fifth streets, Freeboot Friday will be held the first five home games of the season: today, Sept. 25, Oct. 16, Nov. 6 and Nov. 20.

The Pirate football season tradition began in 1999 by Uptown Greenville, a nonprofit organization focused on revitalizing the downtown area.

Safety of Freebooters is a top priority.

“We work with the Greenville Police Department and they do have foot and bike patrol that covers the event and is part of their regular coverage. We also have greeters at the main entrances and volunteer staff monitoring all areas of the event throughout the evening,” Uptown Greenville’s Executive Director Denise Walsh said.

Walsh emphasized that Freeboot is a family-friendly event that includes local businesses. Uptown restaurants will provide food samples; wine and beer from R.A. Jeffreys Distributing as well as locally brewed beer from Ham’s Restaurant and Brewhouse will be available to those 21 and older.

This year Bud Light will be on site with a booth as well, where patrons can receive a text code on their cell phone for a chance to win a 50cc scooter.

“Lee Jeffreys (of R.A. Jeffreys) has sponsored us every year and their interest has continued,” Walsh said.

In addition to the food and drinks, the Pitt County Arts Council at Emerge and the Greenville Museum of Art will have children's crafts, and an inflatable pirate ship will be on site.

As always, live music is an important part of setting the Freebooting atmosphere. This year, however, instead of bringing acts from throughout North America, Uptown Greenville decided to hire Eastern North Carolina musicians for the live entertainment.

Opening today will be 4EverAll, the husband-and wife team of Chris Whitaker and Allison Livingston. They play covers that include The Dave Matthews Band, Jack Johnson, Simon & Garfunkle, The Beatles, Alison Krauss, Lori McKenna and the Pretenders.

“Both are ECU alums;” Walsh said. She heard the couple perform in Beaufort earlier this summer.

“We feel we have great local talent, and it's a wonderful opportunity to showcase that talent. We're happy to do that at Freeboot,” Walsh said.

The headlining band will be The Carroll Dashiell Combo, which includes Dashiell and ECU jazz studies students. Dashiell is the director of the ECU jazz studies program as well as a music director, conductor, composer and arranger.

He's also been recognized within the music industry as a bassist and has performed with the Boston Pops, the National Symphony and the Washington Philharmonic orchestras.
Dashiell also organizes and performs in an annual Motown Concert held in February.

Freeboot attendance has increased each year.

"We had an average of 2,500 people last year, which was an increase over the previous year. It just feels like the interest continues to grow," Walsh said. "We are really trying to make it a good community event."

If you Go!

What: Freeboot Friday
When: 5-8 p.m. today
Where: Five Points Plaza, the corner of Evans and Fifth streets
Cost: Free
Call: 561-8400

Other Freeboot Friday dates
Sept. 25: Blount Harvey and The Charming Youngsters
Oct. 16: Jupiter Jones and Barefoot Wade
Nov. 6: Uncle Mountain and Old Man Whickutt
Nov. 20: Lipbone Redding and Lightnin' Wells

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\[NEWSPAPERS\]
Pirate pride: Cheer the start of a new season

Thursday, September 03, 2009

The traditional signs of autumn’s impending arrival are appearing throughout Greenville with each passing day. The arrival of students for another semester at East Carolina University stands as a landmark each year, as does a day when the morning air comes with a crisp bite to mark the changing season.

However, nothing announces the coming fall like another year of Pirate football. Saturday’s kick-off in Greenville will bring a celebratory spirit to the city and a platform from which to showcase the very best of the community.

It was Oct. 19, 1932, that an edition of the Teco Echo announced the formation of a football team at East Carolina Teachers College, a squad to follow the founding of the school’s baseball and basketball teams. With a team numbering only a few dozen, the school’s first foray into football unfolded with little success. Coach Kenneth Beaty’s charges lost all five games that year, including a season-ending defeat to cross-state rival Appalachian State.

Returning from Boone and feeling the hurt of a season both winless and scoreless, no East Carolina player could have predicted that, 77 years later, Pirate football would be defending a conference championship or seeking a third consecutive bowl bid. They could not have envisioned a squad that draws thousands of fans, home and away, and annually sells out its season tickets. And they could not imagine a day that some of the most successful programs in college football would fear a trip to Greenville and a match up against ECU.

Yet that growth seems natural to modern eyes. After all, East Carolina will this year celebrate the arrival of its first class, the brave souls who journeyed to East Carolina Teachers Training School a century ago. Hard work and lofty dreams forged the development of that modest school into one of the state’s largest universities and an academic institution that has earned widespread respect.

Greenville, too, has grown from a community that made its living from the land to one that trades in ideas. That first football team toiled in the shadow of the Great Depression, in a community that now endures the financial hardship through its focus on education and health care.

Those are all things to celebrate as fall draws closer once again. The first Pirate game should be warmly embraced by a city that could use a little fun following a difficult summer. It should be time for friends and neighbors, for university spirit and for pride in the community.

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Center will get info to off-campus students

The Daily Reflector

Thursday, September 03, 2009

A new Off-Campus Information Center will make getting information to students who do not live on campus much easier for officials at East Carolina University.

The new building, located at 1704-B Arlington Blvd., opened this week and officials celebrated with an open house Thursday.

ECU officials hope the building will become a central place where students can receive information about ECU departments, services, off-campus housing and safety.

"This is going to be a great place for them to come," Lucia Brannon, coordinator of Off-Campus Student Services, said. "Before, we just had a Web site they could visit. Now, they will have a central place to link to campus."

The center will link students who live in and around Greenville to much of the same information and services that are available to students who live in the dorms on campus. Students can visit the center to find out about specific rules or safety in the city.

In addition to providing information, the center will promote safety on and off campus. The Greenville Police Department and ECU Police will provide information for students who live off campus about emergency procedures and other safety issues, Brannon said.

Brannon said she also hopes to use the facility to store household items that students may need following an emergency.

The opening of the center coincides with the Take Heed/Welcome to the Neighborhood Campaign that is intended to educate off-campus students about crime prevention and city rules.

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Jawad Williams jumps into the arms of teammate Damion Grant after the Tar Heels defeated Illinois 75-70 to win the 2005 NCAA title.
Scott Lewis, News & Observer file photo

UNC celebrates with banner night

Former Tar Heels greats will meet on basketball court tonight

BY ROBBI PICKERAL, Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL - The 2009 national championship banner will be unveiled tonight during North Carolina's sold-out Professional Alumni Game at the Smith Center, right beside the one earned by the 2005 squad.

But it appears that a much-anticipated showdown between the two title teams is going to have to wait.

Former UNC players (and current NBA assistant coaches) Phil Ford and Pat Sullivan -- who will be in town for the festivities -- drafted squads earlier this week. The top picks for each: Antawn Jamison and Vince Carter, former teammates from 1995-98.

After that, the title squads got split up, too. Bobby Frasor and Danny Green from '09 are slated to be on the White Team along with Raymond Felton, Jackie Manuel and Marvin Williams from '05. Ty Lawson and Wayne Ellington from '09 are scheduled to be on the Blue Team with Jawad Williams, Rashad McCants and Sean May from '05.

The powers-that-be had hoped to pit the pro-playing members of the last two championship teams on opposite squads. But because four-time All-American Tyler Hansbrough is sidelined by a shin injury, the '05 team would have had a distinct depth advantage.

"Everybody's just excited to be back here, playing with and against each other in this atmosphere," said Jawad Williams, who predicted a victory for the '05 team, had it gone head-to-head with '09. "It's going to be a fun night."
In addition to Ford and Sullivan, NBA coaches expected to attend include Larry Brown, John Kuester, George Karl and Dave Hanners. Current UNC coach Roy Williams and former coaches Dean Smith and Bill Guthridge will also be acknowledged.

The 8 p.m. event will tip off the year-long 100th-year celebration of basketball at UNC. Proceeds from the game will go to the Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center and UNC Children's Hospitals.

Only former Tar Heels currently playing professional basketball are eligible to participate. Some, such as David Noel and Mike Copeland, are not on the rosters because they have already left to join their teams in Europe.

As per NBA rights rules, the game will not be televised, or broadcast on the radio.

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**White Team**

Blue Team

Shammond Williams1994-98

Ed Cota1997-2000

Ty Lawson2006-09

Vince Carter1995-98

Dante Calabria1992-96

Jawad Williams2001-05

Wayne Ellington2006-09

Rashad McCants2002-05

Brandon Wright2006-07

Sean May2002-05

Brendan Haywood1997-2001

Raymond Felton2002-05

Bobby Frasor 2005-09

Jackie Manuel2001-05

Jeff McInnis1994-96

Danny Green2005-09

Marvin Williams2004-05

Rasheed Wallace1993-95