THE DAILY CLIPS

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Big crowd turns out for Pirate vs. 'Pack blood drive

BY KRISTIN DAY
The Daily Reflector

Hundreds of donors waited in line Wednesday, in some cases for hours, to help the Red Cross and the Pirates win the first blood-drive challenge against N.C. State.

Students, faculty and supporters came to the Murphy Center in spurts throughout the morning, but by 4 p.m. at least 230 people had signed up and the waiting room was full. It takes about 300 people to fulfill the 255-pint goal.

Inside, donors relaxed on elevated, reclining patio chairs, sang with the radio, mingled and offered signs of encouragement to friends across the sunlit room. Windows allowed them to look out on to the football field at Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium while they donated.

Elizabeth Browning, special events coordinator for the Student Pirate Club, which sponsored the drive, said she did not know how much blood Wolfpack fans had donated Tuesday.

She said they were only told that the effort had at least reached its goal of 90 pints, and that workers had to turn some donors away because the venue was too small.

But Wednesday, Pirates extra dedicated to winning the challenge were counted twice if they donated platelets in addition to their pint.

D.J. Fussell, president of the Student Pirate Club, said at about 2:15 p.m. he had been one of about 10 people to donate platelets.

ECU’s event also offered N.C. State fans a chance to donate for their school, but by mid-afternoon, everyone who showed up wanted to be counted for the Pirates.

Not everyone came strictly for the blood battle.

Ashton Mylin, freshman nursing major, said giving just makes her feel good because her blood type is rare. However, her hopes were still high that ECU would take the prize.

“I heard that N.C. State has a lot more students,” Mylin said.

“But hopefully, we’ll win.”

Donors received “I Bleed Purple and Gold” T-shirts and could win two tickets to Saturday’s game, an autographed football or a goodie bag from their raffle.

Both State and ECU planned to release their final count today.

Both schools will receive trophies that look copper hands made to hold a large blood droplet replica that goes to the winning school. A presentation is planned for ECU at the home game against Houston on Sept. 27, Family Weekend.

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See BLOOD, A7
Holtz: Unity is harder than it looks

ECU coach shares insights during meeting with the East Carolina Club

BY TOM MARINE
The Daily Reflector

To start his speech at the East Carolina Club’s quarterly meeting on Wednesday night, ECU head football coach Skip Holtz asked everyone in the room to hold their hands six inches apart and then clap them together when he said “ready, set, hit.”

By doing so, he said, he wanted everyone to clap their hands at the exact same time.

After a few different attempts, and nothing close to unity, Holtz said he was trying to prove a point — to show how hard it is to get everyone on the same page, much like a college football team.

Holtz was the featured speaker at the meeting, held at the Cypress Glen Retirement Community, and he addressed the crowd for about 20 minutes, touching on a variety of topics.

Regarding the intense media exposure the Pirates have garnered after two high-profile wins over ranked opponents, Holtz said he wanted his players to experience the attention.

“Attention from the media is like poison,” Holtz said. “It won’t kill you unless you swallow it.”

He said five years ago, when this team’s seniors decided to attend ECU, the football team had only won a single game. However, he said, they came to Greenville because they believed in ECU, including the academics and the program.

As a result, Holtz said he wanted them to enjoy the fruits of their labor, much like the rest of the town has done.

“All the media coverage creates the excitement that we want to build on, but as soon as it shows up, it can go away,” Holtz said.

Before leaving, Holtz took several questions from the audience.

When asked how long he will stay in Greenville as the head football coach, Holtz said he was extremely happy to be here and would not be bothered to call Greenville home for the rest of his life.

“I don’t have an agent and I’m not looking for another job,” Holtz said. “It would have to be an incredible situation to get me out of Greenville.”

Holtz also donated a football signed by the ECU team and drew the winning ticket for Helen White.

In turn, Cypress Glen gave Holtz a backpack with its name on it.

Afterward, members of the ECU marching band provided a special music performance for the audience while they finished dinner.

Betty Speir, a Cypress Glen resident and former trustee at ECU, described Holtz as a vibrant speaker and said she understands how he inspires the football team.

“We are very appreciative of him coming here,” Speir said, referring to the club’s third quarterly meeting. “This is the largest crowd we’ve ever had.”

Contact Tom Marine at tmarine@coxnc.com and at 329-9567
ATLANTA — A long-awaited federal study of an X-ray alternative to the dreaded colonoscopy confirms its effectiveness at spotting most cancers, although it was far from perfect.

Medicare is already considering paying for this cheaper, less intrusive option that could persuade more people to get screened for colon cancer. And some experts believe the new method may boost the 50 percent screening rate for a cancer that is the country’s second biggest killer.

“We’re talking about for the first time really screening the population,” said Dr. Carl Jaffe, an imaging expert at the National Cancer Institute who was not involved in the research.

In the new study, the largest of its kind, the so-called “virtual colonoscopy” identified nine out of 10 people who had cancers and large growths seen by regular colonoscopies.

See CANCER, A7

But there were flaws, too. Among them: The radiologists sometimes misread the X-ray, leading them to spot polyps that weren’t there. That led to unnecessary follow-up testing.

The X-ray test’s real value may be in showing who really needs a regular colonoscopy — it was better at ruling cancer out than it was at detecting it, suggests the report in Thursday’s New England Journal of Medicine.

Colorectal cancer will claim about 50,000 lives this year. The point of screening, widely recommended at age 50, is to find growths before they turn cancerous.

The gold standard is colonoscopy, in which a long, thin tube equipped with a small video camera is snaked through the large intestine to view the lining. Any growth can be removed during the procedure.

It involves sedation and a missed day of work, not to mention preparation that uses pills or liquids to clean out the bowel.

The study focused on CT colonography, also known as virtual colonoscopy. It’s a super X-ray of the colon that is quicker, cheaper and easier on the patient than traditional colonoscopies.

It too requires the bowel clean-out and has a potential serious drawback — radiation.

Colonoscopies cost up to $3,000. The X-ray test costs $300 to $800; most insurers don’t cover it so far, but Medicare is considering it.

Insurers likely will weigh the new study heavily in their
coverage decisions, said Dr. Durado Brooks, who oversees colorectal and prostate cancer programs at the American Cancer Society.

Preliminary, unpublished data from the new study already helped persuade the cancer society and others to put out guidelines in March that added virtual colonoscopy and a stool DNA test to the recommended arsenal of screenings for colon cancer, Brooks said.

In the new study, both the standard colonoscopy and the X-ray test were given to 2,531 people at 15 U.S. medical centers.

The scans showed large growths in about one in six people, although some were false alarms not confirmed by colonoscopy.

Of the patients with growths verified by colonoscopy, 90 percent were flagged through the X-ray scans.

"That's very good news," said Dr. C. Daniel Johnson, the lead author of the study. He is a researcher at the Mayo Clinic campus in Scottsdale, Ariz., with financial ties to one virtual colonoscopy company, GE Healthcare.

Back to the false alarms — only one in four of those patients diagnosed with a growth actually had one, noted Dr. Robert Fletcher, a retired Harvard Medical School professor who wrote an editorial accompanying the study. Fletcher is a paid consultant for a company that makes a DNA screening test for colon cancer.

Some additional drawbacks to virtual colonoscopy:

- In about one in six of the patients, the X-ray found abnormalities outside the colon that led doctors to recommend additional testing or care. Some of those discoveries may be life-threatening, but others are not and investigation of them may prove expensive and hard on the patient, Fletcher wrote.

- The X-ray tests are not as good at colonoscopy at detecting flat growths on the colon wall that are more likely to be cancerous than the more familiar knobby polyps, according to other researchers.

- Virtual colonoscopies, currently recommended every five years, expose people to repeated doses of radiation. It's half the dose of a standard CT exam, but the cumulative effects are not yet known. Colonoscopy is only recommended every 10 years.

"These concerns do not rule out CT colonography as a screening test but they need to be considered," Fletcher wrote.

The study was not designed to look at whether the screenings prevented deaths.
Forum focuses on WVU melee

BY KATHRYN KENNEDY
The Daily Reflector

A town hall meeting offering students the chance to question campus police about a variety of concerns was held Wednesday at East Carolina University.

The 5 p.m. forum, sponsored by the student government association, drew approximately 30 students, ECU police officers and school administrators. SGA brokered the meeting as a response to public outcry over police behavior following ECU's victory over West Virginia University nearly two weeks ago.

ECU Police Chief Scott Shelton and two of his division heads spent the first half of the hour-long event explaining the programs their department offers and the structure and philosophies that guide them.

"We want to work hand-in-hand with you to develop programs," Shelton said, later adding, "All officers are evaluated on character and how they treat the public. Most important are dignity and respect."

Students were then invited to question Shelton, and the first several centered around the ongoing State Bureau of Investigation examination into use of excessive force by law enforcement officers during post-game celebrations.

One student asked how they know mutual aid law enforcement agencies will act responsibly.

Shelton explained that, though all law enforcement agencies are given the same basic training, home games now will be staffed only with other Pitt County agencies because "we serve a different population in this area."

Another student followed that question by asking why civilians can be immediately arrested for using force but officers are not. "I don't see any action taken against these officers," he said, noting the videotape that seemingly depicted unnecessary force.

Shelton noted the right of law enforcement to "use necessary force," and said any discipline will be doled out by agency officials once the SBI — a neutral agency — concludes its investigation.

A final question addressed allegations that Shelton was not in the briefing room with officers before the game. He admitted he was out surveying the campus during his first home game for "a broader perspective" on parking, tailgating and security in the event Tropical Storm Hanna caused any damage. He reassured the student, however, that he reviewed the briefing both before and after it was presented.

Straying from that subject, a female student asked if security cameras are monitored 24 hours a day, and if it is protocol for multiple patrol cars to respond to a traffic stop. The chief answered the yes to the first query, but said any officers aside from those interacting with the driver should depart after ensuring the scene is safe.

Athletics Director Terry Holland closed the meeting by telling those assembled that the Athletic's Department will be "happily" pay the $10,000 fine imposed on ECU by Conference USA after students stormed the field, because "we're convinced that those who stormed the field had the best intentions."

"Now that we know the consequences," he continued, "I don't foresee it being a problem again."

SGA President Drew Griffen said he hopes to create a monthly forum between police and students.

"We want to work together the whole year," he said, "not just in a reactive state."

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Pell Grants may face $6B shortfall

BY SAM DILLON
AND TAMAR LEWIN
N.Y. Times News Service

Battered by a worsening economy, college students are seeking federal financial aid in record numbers this year, leading Bush administration officials to warn Congress that the most important federal aid program, Pell Grants, may need up to $6 billion in additional taxpayer funds next year.

Driving the increased applications for federal aid, in part, have been nontraditional students returning to school to improve their job skills during the economic downturn, said Terry W. Hartle, senior vice president for public affairs at the American Council on Education, which represents colleges and universities.

Estimates by the Department of Education suggest that the new president will face an unusually burdensome financing shortfall or the fall-out that would accompany trimming the nation's leading college aid program.

"There are a lot of things going on — more people are applying for student aid, more people are going to college, more people who qualify for the aid are showing up at school," said Thomas P. Skelly, the Education Department's director of budget service, who wrote a memorandum detailing the problem to Congress.

As of July 31, 800,000 more students had applied for grants than on that date last year, according to the memorandum, which called the increase one of the largest ever year to year.

This year, more than 6 million low-income college students will receive Pell Grants ranging from $431 to $4,731, federal officials said.

Congress appropriated $14 billion for the grants for the current fiscal year, but because of the increase and because of accumulated shortfalls from previous years, lawmakers will need to add $6 billion in new funds next year or cut the size of the grants, Education Department officials said.

"There may need to be an announcement in February 2009," the memorandum warns, that Pell grants for the following academic year will be reduced.

"It's the mother of all shortfalls," said Barmak Nassirian, associate executive director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. "There's more unmet need than anyone predicted."

The Pell Grant, created in 1972, has long been the most important form of aid to needy students, and for millions, whether recent high school graduates or those who have been working for years, higher education would be impossible without such aid.
Move unlikely for ECU

Holland says BCS talk not happening

BY A.J. CARR
STAFF WRITER

East Carolina can beat big BCS conference opponents. Still, a chance to join 'em isn't likely anytime soon.

ECU athletic director Terry Holland says he doesn't hear realignment and expansion talk rumbling across the college football landscape — certainly not any now involving East Carolina.

"It may happen, but there's nothing pushing it now," said Holland, who spoke at the Raleigh Sports Club Wednesday.

The No. 15-ranked Pirates are revving up for Saturday's game at N.C. State, keeping their sights set on winning a first Conference USA title, one of their primary goals.

C-USA, like its name suggests, is spread out geographically. It gives ECU exposure in places like Houston and Dallas, but doesn't create the rivalries coaches, players and fans revel in.

"We need regional rivalries," Holland said.

SHOW HIM LOVE: The perception of ECU football coach Skip Holtz now is much different than when he arrived four years ago.

"Most people didn't want me to hire him," Holland said. "Now they don't want to lose him. They say: 'What can we do? Give him the library.'"

Holland said a recent contract extension for Holtz is "well in the top half, probably top one-third" among that of BCS conference coaches.

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In regards to what the Pirate Nation can to do keep Holtz, Holland said "love him to death."

"He noted how Rich Rodriguez got guff from West Virginia fans after losing to underdog Pittsburgh last year, a defeat that knocked the Mountaineers out of the BCS championship game.

Rodriguez left his alma mater for Michigan. West Virginia will receive $4 million in a buyout.

"Coaches, athletic directors, college presidents and CEO's make too much money," Holland said.

FANFARE: Based on ticket sales, it appears East Carolina will sell out four of its five home games this year at Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium. The final game of the year, against UTEP the day after Thanksgiving, is one that might not have a packed house.

"A football game [in Greenville] is special," Holland said. "There's a connection in the stands and on the field that's special."

Holtz and his players have helped that rapport by staying on the field and interacting with the crowd after games.

LIGHTER MOMENT: In addressing the Sports Club crowd at Highland United Methodist Church, Holland said that each time he came there to speak he heard a murmur.

"It sounds like: 'Sit down, Holland!' " he said. "I think it's from North Carolina fans. They can't help it."

That was a reference to the 16 years Holland coached basketball at Virginia, where he stood often in building a powerhouse program and had some wins over the Tar Heels.

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UNC: Colonoscopy follow-ups can wait

BY SARAH AVERY
STAFF WRITER

People who show no signs of cancer during a colonoscopy screening do not need a follow-up scan five years later, scientists at UNC-Chapel Hill reported today.

Although experts recommend a second screening after 10 years, in practice, many doctors have their patients come back sooner. The UNCH-CH finding should bolster the expert advice — something greeted with relief by patients, who often dread the prospect of undergoing the invasive test.

"I think it's good news," said Pam Pearce of Hillsborough, who had her first colonoscopy four years ago at 50. "The better news would be if you need only one in your life."

The study, published today in the New England Journal of Medicine, was the first to follow a large group of patients through the initial test, then conduct a follow-up. It found that the vast majority of participants who showed no signs of cancer in their first screening were also clear five years later.

"Tests can be used too often," said Dr. David Ransohoff, a professor at UNCH-CH and co-author of the study. "Docs and patients are unwilling to accept any risk [of cancer]. But it may not benefit patients very much for the effort and cost and risk" of the test.

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Q&A
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THE PROCEDURE

What is a colonoscopy? It's a test that uses a lighted scope to find cancerous growths in the rectum and colon.

How accurate is it? It's considered the most sensitive test, compared with blood tests and less-invasive procedures, including CT colonoscopy.

What are the drawbacks? Some patients experience discomfort, but the main issue is the preparation. A day before the test, patients must drink a saltwater potion to clear out the bowels. "They're also given sedation and must miss a day of work. The test carries a risk of the scope causing a tear or bleeding.

Is it expensive? It can run about $1,000. Some insurance covers it. Medicare will pay for one every 10 years, or biannually for people who are at high risk of colon cancer.

How common is colorectal cancer? It's the third most common type of non-skin cancer for men and women in the U.S. Only lung cancer is more deadly. More than 147,000 new cases of colorectal cancer are diagnosed a year, resulting in 57,000 deaths.
THE PEOPLE’S FORUM

And work where?

Just finished reading Eric Johnson’s Sept. 11 Point of View about the debate on admitting undocumented high school students into the UNC university system. By being undocumented, they are by definition illegal immigrants. This is generally not their fault, and I applaud them for getting an education and assimilating into the American way of life.

I have a question as to what happens after they graduate. Because they are undocumented students, I assume they do not have legal Social Security numbers so how can they legally get employment? As graduates do they automatically get a green card or a Social Security card? If not, then why should the taxpayers provide an education to someone who in all probability may eventually be deported? Am I missing something here?

Albert Rodrick
Havelock
Doctors' rewards

No one should be surprised by the Sept. 10 article on the paucity of medical students interested in careers as general internists. Internists, family physicians and pediatricians routinely care for the sickest, poorest, most needy individuals in our society — a job that requires patience, compassion, dedication, a dash of altruism and a willingness to serve without too much concern about when or how much you are getting paid.

The irony is that the doctor you know and who knows you, whom you will likely count on in your hour of greatest need, is probably at the bottom of the medical pay scale regardless of knowledge, skill or training. Our system rewards use of expensive technology and procedures, not compassionate, hands-on comprehensive patient care.

So hopefully you have a primary care doc who's not retiring anytime soon. You may have difficulty replacing him or her in the coming years. Or you may find yourself paying your new physician a retainer to be available to you as part of a "concierge practice." Either way, our society needs to think about it. A lot. The laws of supply and demand apply to medicine, too.

John Rickabaugh, Beaufort