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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481
ECU event focuses on keeping students safe

BY MICHAEL ABRAMOWITZ
The Daily Reflector

It took all of 80 seconds for a mock dorm room to reach a temperature of 1,680 degrees when set on fire Wednesday by Greenville Fire-Rescue personnel outside Mendenhall Student Center on the East Carolina University campus.

The demonstration was one that Life and Safety Battalion Chief Doug Branch said students needed to see as part of ECU’s Pirate Safety Day, held in conjunction with National Campus Fire Safety Month.

“If you don’t practice for a fire like this and know how to find your safe exit, you’re going to have a very bad day,” Branch told the group of more than 100 students and faculty who watched the fire from a safe distance.

In addition to fire prevention and safety information, the campus’s Office of Environmental Health and Safety arranged for booths staffed by university, public and private agency experts who provided information and referrals on topics including sexual assault, crime prevention and personal safety, crisis intervention, conflict mediation, mental health, driving safety and other issues college students might face.

Pirate Safety Day was sponsored by the N.C. De-

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cont...
SAFETY

Continued from A1


September is targeted for campus health safety awareness among the student population and the many public and private safety agencies and offices affiliated with the campus, ECU Police Department Chief Scott Shelton said.

“We’re very appreciative of all the work that has gone into this effort,” Shelton said.

Education and participation in safety and health begins even before students arrive at the campus, Assistant Chief Dawn Tevepaugh said.

“They and their parents are educated at home with their parents about safety in their residences, on the streets and in parking lots around the campus area,” Tevepaugh said.

“It’s highly important that they take their safety seriously. That’s why we make events like this so visible to students.”

The event was one of the programs offered to incoming freshmen as part of their “wellness passport” agenda.

“Our office is more involved than ever with campus safety awareness,” campus safety manager Christa Radford, who coordinated the event, said.

As part of the passport program, students must attend a number of assorted events during the semester to increase their awareness of health and safety issues they could face, she said.

A fire at Clement Hall in 2006 and last year’s fire that destroyed the back house at Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity only heightened awareness of safety.

“We’ve steadily increased our fire safety training of resident assistants and dorm coordinators in the hopes they will pass that on to campus residents and students participating in Greek life,” Radford said.

Resident assistants and supervisors look for clutter and fire dangers in dorms and fraternity houses to counsel students about fire hazards, Radford said.

They work harder than ever to gain student compliance with fire code regulations and to use common sense about fire safety and all other safety concerns, she said.

“I think they have finally realized it’s all in their best interest and are complying,” she said.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for campus safety managers is to be sure that students respond quickly when smoke alarms sound in dorms and buildings on and off the campus, even the ones that are triggered by minor incidents like burned popcorn, Radford said.

In 2009, there were no on-campus fires, but 247 alarms were triggered in 15 buildings, a decrease from 293 the year before.

The campus safety manager said student awareness and preparation are the keys to a better student experience.

“Pay attention and think about the consequences of your actions, whether it’s walking home alone from a party or throwing a lit cigarette into a trash can,” Radford said. Take your safety seriously, whether in your dorm room or at a club in the city.”

Contact Michael Abramowitz at mabramowitz@reflector.com or (252) 329-9571.
COMMUNITY

Women's agenda assembly
The East Carolina University Women's Studies Program and N.C. Women United will present the Women's Agenda Assembly-Pitt County from 1-5 p.m. Saturday in Room 1031 in ECU’s Bate Building. Registration begins at 12:30 p.m. Participants will hear recommendations from the N.C. Women United 2008 Draft Women’s Agenda and will discuss and prioritize the issues to determine the community’s Women’s Agenda. For more information, contact Rebecca S. Powers at 328-4885 or powersr@ecu.edu.

Benefit ride
Ron Ayers Motorsports will hold a benefit ride and reverse Texas Hold ‘em Poker Run on Saturday. Registration is from 8:30-9:30 a.m. The ride begins at 10, and lunch will be served at noon. There also will be raffle tickets and vendor displays. The cost is $10 per hand to benefit the Heather Anne Purtee Memorial Scholarship at ECU’s of Nursing. Call 758-3084.
N.C. State-ECU game sells out

The Daily Reflector

East Carolina's home football game against in-state rival North Carolina State, scheduled for Oct. 16, is officially sold out, according to an announcement from the ECU Athletic Ticket Office on Wednesday. Only 2,300 tickets remain available for ECU's Homecoming game against Marshall on Oct. 23.
Thornton defends UNC sports goals

BY ERIC FERRERI
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL - Even as embarrassing investigations of UNC-Chapel Hill's football program continue, Chancellor Holden Thorp is defending the school's big athletic ambitions, including the $70 million expansion to Kenan Stadium.

In an opinion column published on page 11A of today's News & Observer, the chancellor also defends Athletics Director Dick Baddour's handling of the ongoing problems related to the football team.

Thorp says the stadium expansion, which in large part will provide luxury seating for deep-pocketed donors, is necessary. The project won't involve public money - private donations will pay half the cost, and sales of the seats and luxury suites in the new section will pay the balance.

"Carolina fans are passionate about athletics and football and will stick with us to make the Blue Zone a success," Thorp writes today. "Better facilities will give us the ability to attract even better recruits who can succeed."

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NCAA PENALTIES

Inside: Two starting defensive backs must sit out games, repay part of travel cost. → IC

UNC-CH Chancellor Holden Thorp, center, listens to Athletics Director Dick Baddour discuss the investigation. Butch Davis, head football coach, is at left.

ETHAN HYMAN - ethyman@newsobserver.com
ceed both in the classroom and on the field.

One piece of the stadium addition will be a new, far larger home for an academic support program for athletes. That, officials have said, was a key selling point for fundraisers soliciting donations.

“We need to strengthen our academic support program for all 700+ student-athletes, and getting new space is critical to our success,” Thorp writes. “We also need to secure a long-term revenue stream to support the entire 28-sport athletic program.”

Praise for the AD

Thorp gives Baddour a vote of confidence. Lately the two have been on an apology tour of sorts, explaining the football program’s situation to various university constituencies such as the UNC system’s Board of Governors and the UNC-CH Faculty Council.

“I can’t imagine having a better athletic director than Dick Baddour,” Thorp writes. “He has experience in compliance, and he values the integrity of the University over winning any game. It is precisely with someone of Dick’s experience and love for the university that we have the best opportunity to address the problems before us and ensure that they don’t happen again.”

The university and the NCAA are investigating possibly impermissible benefits that football players may have received from sports agents, as well as possible academic misconduct involving a former undergraduate tutor.

Thirteen players were held out of the season-opener Sept. 4 against LSU while the university and the NCAA investigated. One of those players has since been reinstated. And on Wednesday, the NCAA ruled that two of the players held out of games so far this season must serve suspensions and must make charitable contributions to repay benefits they received from agents.

Thorp makes several other points, including:

The university has instituted a social media policy to monitor Twitter and other websites popular with college students.

UNC is in the middle of a review of “a number of sports and student-athletes” to see if potential NCAA violations stretch beyond football.

The average SAT score for football players has risen 47 points since Butch Davis became coach in 2007.

Thorp also said it’s possible for the university to have a winning football team and to maintain academic standards.

“I really believe that this is a golden opportunity to strengthen the culture in the football program to one with a greater emphasis on academic effort and academic success,” he wrote.

The stadium expansion and the ongoing football saga have raised some questions about the university’s priorities. McKay Coble, UNC-CH’s faculty chairwoman, said she’d prefer that the university clean up the current football problems before focusing on the expansion.

‘Hard ... to swallow’

The stadium addition will feature suites and other luxury seating. For the first time, fans seated in those high-end sections will be able to buy alcohol – a carrot the university is dangling to sell the seats. In all, 20 luxury suites and about 3,000 seats will be added.

“This is one of the prices you pay for going into big-time football,” Coble said of the expansion. “As an academic, it is hard for me to swallow personally, not only our own approach to it but America’s addiction to athletics.”

But the faculty believes in Thorp – an alum who rose quickly through the faculty and administrative ranks before winning the top job two years ago – and in his managing of the situation, Coble said.

“Our respect for him is immense,” she said. “We know he’s on top of it.”

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eric.ferrer@newsobserver.com
or 919-829-4563
Football at Chapel Hill: Questions and answers

In a column on Saturday, John Drescher, The N&O's executive editor, posed 10 questions for UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Holden Thorp dealing with the NCAA's investigation of the university's football program, questions Drescher said faculty members should have raised at a recent meeting with the chancellor.

In a response, Thorp defended the faculty, saying he had addressed the investigation in a briefing he gave them, and his doing so may have answered many questions in advance. He replied to Drescher's questions as follows.

1) You are investigating whether a tutor employed by the university to work with football players gave inappropriate aid. That tutor also worked for coach Butch Davis and tutored his high school son. Is it appropriate for a tutor to work for both the university and the football coach?

There's no policy that would have prohibited the tutor from working for the Davis family. But knowing what we know now, it wasn't a good idea.

2) You have indicated that academic misconduct might have occurred. If so, who is ultimately responsible?

It's my job to ensure that academic integrity is at the forefront of everything we do at this university. On the individual level, any student who engages in academic misconduct is responsible for his or her own actions and decisions. For 130 years, our students have pledged under our Honor Code not to lie, cheat or steal. It's the heart of integrity at Carolina. People make mistakes. When that happens, they have to bear the consequences. When those people are our students, they also need to know that we will always care about them and be there to help them learn from and rise above those mistakes. We've got a student-run Honor Court system in which I have complete confidence.

3) If the NCAA hadn't investigated football players and their relationships with agents, would UNC have learned of the possible academic cheating? If not, isn't that a problem?

Probably not initially. But our work has shown that we have strong controls in place in the academic support program, and I think that we would have eventually discovered the misconduct. We have asked the elected Faculty Committee on Athletics to examine this problem in detail and recommend necessary changes to our academic support programs.

4) Some players used social media to discuss their travels and possible contact with agents. Shouldn't UNC's compliance officers closely monitor Twitter and Facebook?

We instituted a new social media policy in August, and Athletic Department staff will monitor social media sites. Postings that raise questions will be brought to the attention of our compliance staff.

5) Will you conduct a sport-by-sport review to see whether other athletes might have received inappropriate academic aid?

We are part way through examining a number of sports and student-athletes, and if we find anything, we'll address it.

6) Should the $70 million expansion of Kenan Stadium be canceled or scaled back, depending on the results of the investigations?

No. We need to strengthen our academic support program for all 700-plus student-athletes, and getting new space is critical to our success. We also need to secure a long-term revenue stream to support the entire 27-sport athletic program. Carolina fans are passionate about athletics and football and will stick with us to make the Blue Zone a success. Better facilities will give us the ability to attract even better recruits who can succeed both in the classroom and on the field.

7) Is UNC admitting more football players who don't meet typical UNC admission standards than it did five or 10 years ago?

No. Since Coach Davis arrived, the average SAT for football has gone up 47 points.

8) Are you satisfied with the oversight of the athletic department?

Yes. I can't imagine having a better athletic director than Dick Baddour. He has experience in compliance, and he values the integrity of the university over winning any game. It is precisely with someone of Dick's experience and love for the university that we have the best opportunity to address the problems before us and ensure that they don't happen again.

9) Is it possible to have a winning football team and maintain top-rate academic standards for all students?

Absolutely yes. Obviously this investigation is a setback for us. But it's also an opportunity for us to take a hard look at everything we're doing and then to get better. I really believe that this is a golden opportunity to strengthen the culture in the football program to one with a greater emphasis on academic effort and academic success. Those changes are already under way. We can show the nation how to respond to these challenges and create a football program that succeeds in the classroom and on the field.

10) What have you learned about operating a Division I football program since starting your job as chancellor?

This is one of the hardest things I've faced so far, and it's also one of the most important. I know that people will judge us by how we respond to this challenge. My goal is for us to demonstrate through our actions what we stand for and where our priorities lie. We will put academic integrity and academic success above winning, but we also believe that we can field winning teams while creating extraordinary educational opportunities for our student-athletes.

Finally, my focus has been on academics. But there are two prongs to our review—one is academics and the other is agent-related. Please do not make assumptions about the category of the investigation into which any particular student-athlete might be placed. There are different types and degrees of transgressions and different processes for resolving them.

The common denominators are the demand for great effort and the need for patience. We are doing everything humanly possible to bring this matter to conclusion.
Local cake makers compete on 'Food Network Challenge'

By Amy Hote
Amy Hote@StarNewsOnline.com

Published: Wednesday, September 22, 2010 at 5:37 p.m.

You could call them the odd couple of cake decorating.

Taylor Ross rides a Harley. Alison Meehan is a mom.

Ross had to be forced to compete in the "Food Network Challenge" with peer pressure. Meehan jumped at the chance.

But when both Wilmington cake makers teamed up for the challenge, which airs at 8 p.m. Sunday on the Food Network, the duo worked in nearly perfect synchronicity.

"It takes a lot of skill to be able to go in and do those competitions. And you have to be able to think on your feet," Meehan said. "You know, being able to create a beautiful wedding cake in a low-pressure situation is one thing."

The television show pits four teams of two cake makers against each other in a timed race to produce the best-decorated and most creative cake.

Meehan, who owns Alison's Cakery, had applied for several competitions and was awaiting a reply. Then Ross, who owns Sweet T's Cakes, received a phone call from a Food Network researcher who had found her website and thought she would make a good competitor.

The women have known each other for about three years and both work out of their homes. Neither have been professionally trained in baking. Meehan started her business after her son said her cakes tasted great, but she could make them look better. And Ross started out with an art degree and a concentration in metal design from East Carolina University. She made the transition to wedding cakes after deciding it allowed her to remain creative -- it never goes out of style and she could do it anywhere in the country.

Decorating and design comes easy to her. It was the baking part, she said, that she had to work hard on.

Ross said that people who work in the wedding industry in Wilmington all know each other and help each other out because there is enough business to go around. So they made an agreement.

"We had both agreed that because we're both (one-woman) shows, that whoever got on, the other one would be the assistant," Meehan said.

Ross, however, turned down the offer several times before friends talked her into it.

"I didn't want to do it. I try to make everything I do at my job ... stress-free and I try
to plan and make everything be not last minute," Ross said. "And that show is everything that is the opposite of that."

When that last call was made and the women decided to accept the offer, two weeks of their life sped by.

They were told the theme for their challenge would be "Beauty and the Beast." They were given the choice of four characters to design a cake around. Ross and Meehan got their first choice – Lumière, the candle in the Disney movie.

While thinking about how they could make that cake come to life, the women went to work baking. They made their cakes here in Wilmington and then FedExed them to High Noon Studios in Denver, Colo.

"That was a challenge in itself," Meehan said.

The duo flew to Denver on a Sunday in April. Ross had a pre-interview on a Monday and the competition was on a Tuesday.

They had to be at the studios by 5:30 a.m. for hair and makeup. The winner was not announced until 10 p.m.

They can't tell anyone who won, obviously. We'll all have to wait to see the show for that.

But Meehan did say they got away without dropping the cake.

"It was definitely stressful. When we moved the cake, we were both like, 'We're going to throw up.' But we didn't. Nobody threw up and we didn't drop it,' " she said.

Ross said all her stress evaporated when they started decorating the cake on set. She was tired of the waiting and planning and just wanted to do it. Even the judging didn't stress her out.

"I liked (facing the judges) because ... in art school, that's what you thrive on is the feedback from your peers and your teachers," she said. "After you've worked so hard on a project, you can't wait to have people critique it. That's how you learn."

The judges for this competition were Keegan Gerhard, rated one of the nation's top 10 pastry chefs of 2002 and 2004 by Chocolatier and Pastry Art & Design magazines; Carry Vincent, an inductee in the International Cake Exploration Société Hall of Fame and the Dessert Professional Hall of Fame; and a Disney representative.

And then, as quickly as the phone call had started it all, it was over.

"It's weird because it was so dramatic for us for a few weeks. The whole event just takes so much energy and then it just, like, drops," Meehan said. "And then wedding season came and nobody knew yet because the show hasn't aired. It's not really 'out there' in Wilmington, but it's something that we did."

Ross said that, in retrospect, she really liked the challenge.

Both women have been invited back to compete again.

Amy Hotz: 343-2099

On Twitter.com: @AmyHotz

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Azalea Festival artwork to be unveiled at Art at the Oak

By Jessica Toomer
jessica.toomer@starnewsonline.com

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The setting: billowy white tents nestled under the looming oaks of Airlie Gardens with melodies of steel drums floating in the air. The cause: gaining attention and raising money for Wilmington’s biggest festival of the year.

The 64th annual North Carolina Azalea Festival is getting a head start on 2011’s festivities with Art at the Oak at Airlie Gardens on Friday. The fundraiser, which is aimed at promoting local artwork as well as generating money for next year’s festival, includes a dance under the stars (and the beautiful Airlie Oak), heavy hors d’oeuvres, an open bar and a chance to meet the artist.

This year, a painting by plein air painter Jenny McKinnon Wright will be unveiled as the official 2011 N.C. Azalea Festival artwork. Wright, a Wilmingtonian who studied art at East Carolina University and continued with graduate work at Georgia State University, has taught art in the North Carolina and Georgia school systems.

Her impressionistic style of landscape painting creates rich images of the Southeast. From endless beaches to lush marshes and historic structures, Wright’s vibrant artwork mirrors the locations she paints in. She adopted the plein air technique after studying French impressionism. The style, whose name means “in the open air” because the artist creating it usually paints outdoors, is “the truest way to capture the emotion of a place through the color and the atmosphere,” Wright said.

This year’s president of the Azalea Festival, Hank Estep, said Wright was chosen not only for her style, but for her background as well.

“We wanted someone with roots in the area,” Estep said.

Wright said home is what inspired this year’s collection of prints.

The painting won’t be unveiled until Friday, but judging from Wright’s comments the self-proclaimed “downtown girl” may have been inspired by scenes of downtown Wilmington.

“I knew a few things going in,” she said. “I wanted the painting to clearly be visible as Wilmington, have direct correlation to the festival and the location had to sing to me.”

Jessica Toomer: 343-2096

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UNCW women's player unsure of future with team; coach disciplined

By Brian Mull
Brian.Mull@StarNewsOnline.com

Published: Wednesday, September 22, 2010 at 10:55 p.m.

The president of the UNC-Wilmington student-athlete advisory council said his friend Julia Finlay is concerned about going forward on the women's basketball team in the wake of the extreme punishment she endured Monday afternoon.

John Dillashaw, a member of the track and field program, serves as the liaison between the university's athletes and the athletic department. He spoke with athletic director Kelly Mehrtens and Finlay on Wednesday.

"Julia is a real strong girl," he said. "She feels like it's going to be an awkward situation in the locker room and she's going to handle it the best she can and let the athletic department handle things how they need to."

Mehrtens and faculty athletic representative Sue Combs continued their investigation Wednesday. Mehrtens issued a statement around 10:15 p.m., stating that assistant women's basketball coach Johnetta Hayes would receive undisclosed disciplinary action.

"As mentioned previously, the drill in question will not be tolerated and will never happen again in our program," Mehrtens said in the release. "The issue has been addressed with the employee and appropriate disciplinary action has been taken. Due to university policy and state law, I am unable to comment further."

Dillashaw said Finlay's account of the incident matched up with what he heard from the athletic department. He said student-athletes are routinely addressed regarding hazing and, while he understands how some could view this incident as hazing, he doesn't see it that way.

On Monday, Finlay was forced to log roll laterally 94 feet for 30 consecutive minutes while Hayes supervised and the men's basketball team conducted a workout on the Trask Coliseum floor. She was being punished for getting kicked out of a practice last week. She vomited three times during the episode.

Seahawks coach Cynthia Cooper-Dyke, who was out of town on a recruiting trip Monday, apologized to Finlay and her parents on Tuesday night.

"I have determined that a serious error in judgment was made by a member of our women's basketball coaching staff with the implementation of a rolling drill," Mehrtens said in a previous statement released by the university late Tuesday night.

"The well-being of our student-athletes is always first and foremost on our minds. I have spoken to the student-athlete involved with the incident and have assured her that this will never happen again."

The incident was also discussed an early morning meeting of the university's athletic council. Chancellor Rosemary DePaolo and her assistant, Max Allen, attended that meeting.

Brian Mull: 343-2034
On Twitter.com: @BGMull
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KFC pays college women for ad space on buns

Last week, the chain confessed that more than six in 10 Americans ages 18 to 25 — the chain's key demographic — couldn't identify who Colonel Sanders was in the KFC logo.

Now, it's turning to cute women parading around campus with "Double Down" emblazoned across their fannies.

The nation's largest women's group doesn't like it one bit. "It's so obnoxious to once again be using women's bodies to sell fundamentally unhealthy products," says Terry O'Neill, president of the National Organization for Women. What's more, she says, KFC has forgotten something important: Women make more than half the decisions about what to eat for dinner.

But KFC marketing chief John Cywinski says it's an effective way to catch the attention of young men — KFC's key customers and the biggest fans of Double Down.

As of Tuesday afternoon, KFC had received no complaints about the campaign, KFC spokesman Rick Maynard says. "We've taken a page out of the book of some apparel companies and sororities who have promoted in this way for years," Maynard says.

The program began last week at Spalding University in downtown Louisville. The chain plans to expand it to at least three more campuses. The additional schools and the women there will be picked via a Facebook promotion.

The stunt hasn't reached Colorado State University — and senior public relations major Candace Carlucci hopes it never does. "It may be funny, but it's also inappropriate and degrading," she says. "There must be another way for KFC to get its message out."

Brand guru Jonathan Salem Baskin says there's nothing "inherently wrong" with using women to attract guys, but in this case, "It's irrelevant to the product." KFC would do better, he says, to follow the McDonald's model: "Clean up your stores, fix the menu and please people with the food you make."

One point of confusion, he jokes: "I guess the buns do come with KFC's sandwich."