THE DAILY CLIPS

September 24, 2008

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

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USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
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The Greensboro News & Record
Newsweek
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Business Week
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Parents vote to form group to support gifted students

BY BROCK LETCHWORTH
The Daily Reflector

Parents concerned about the Pitt County Schools Talented and Gifted program have formed an advocacy group they say provides them a voice in the community.

During an informational session Monday night at South Central High School, more than 100 parents voted in favor of the PAGE group (Partners for the Advancement of Gifted Education). Its purpose will be to support and encourage the development of gifted students.

PAGE is an affiliate of the North Carolina Association of the Gifted and Talented. Pitt County's group is a collaboration of parents and representatives from the school's central office and East Carolina University.

School officials say the need for a collaborative voice was most evident earlier this year when budget cuts to talented and gifted programs attracted dozens of parents to board meetings wanting to speak on the matter.

"PAGE gives these parents a voice and makes them feel a little more secure about having a hand in their child's education," said Pitt County

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GIFTED

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Schools Coordinator of Instructional Technology and Media Services Tim DeCresie. “If there is an issue, they can now come in with a collective voice and someone speaking on their behalf. That carries a lot of weight.”

According to the N.C. Association of the Gifted and Talented, a PAGE group works to serve the best interests of gifted students by offering support to local programs and working to assure the probable future success of PAGE. Members are asked to stay informed regarding issues affecting gifted persons on the local, state and national levels and tell others about any needs of gifted students, their education and other issues that could affect their well-being.

Beth Webb, a local teacher and parent of talented and gifted students, was named president of the group. She said the group’s primary goal will be lobbying local and state officials for the needs of talented and gifted students.

“It is going to be a lot of people coming together with one voice saying we don’t want to see our academically gifted kids get left behind,” Webb said.

Katie O’Connor, an assistant professor in East Carolina University’s Department of Curriculum and Instruction, will serve as the university’s liaison for the PAGE group. She said PAGE groups statewide have the flexibility to develop their own philosophies, characteristics and processes in addition to the standards recommended by the state association.

Academically or intellectually gifted students perform or show the potential to perform at substantially high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience or environment, according to the state’s definition of giftedness listed on the Pitt County Schools Web site for A.I.G. Services.

The PAGE group has scheduled its next meeting tentatively for Oct. 20. Webb said the group is still debating whether to accept dues, which could be used to fund scholarships, summer programs and the purchasing of supplies.

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Pirate basketball team goes back to grade school

The Daily Reflector

All 14 members of the East Carolina men's basketball team visited with students in a fifth grade class at the Oakwood School in Greenville on Tuesday.

The Pirate players spent approximately one hour helping the kids with their assignments, while answering many questions about their hobbies and habits off the court. The players also stressed the importance of doing well in school.

"It was a lot of fun to come out here today and spend some time with these kids," senior guard Sam Hinnant said. "I think it's important for us as student-athletes to find ways to reach out and give back to our community."

Oakwood School is a private co-educational school for grades kindergarten to high school.

East Carolina begins basketball practice on Oct. 17. The first regular-season game is at home against Coker on Nov. 14.

— ECU Media Relations
Food looks and tastes great at ECU’s Todd Dining Hall

I had the pleasure of visiting East Carolina University’s Todd Dining Hall recently. It sure didn’t look like the dining hall I had access to as a student. The newly renovated dining hall is known as the “fresh food company,” and there were lots and lots of healthy food and beverage choices available.

On display at the entrance to the dining hall was a plated “healthy meal of the day.” The healthy meal of the day has less than 500 calories and less than 30 percent calories from fat. The day I had lunch they served a wonderful cranberry glazed pork loin (sliced to order), with a couscous pasta and acorn squash. Yum Yum!

There were great aromas in the air as I approached the dining hall and the food both looked and tasted great. Congratulations to ECU Dining for making it possible for students and visitors to the dining room to select a healthy diet. The dining hall is open to the public, although if you go you will probably need to walk over since parking is at a premium on campus.
NCCU degrees from Ga. ruled valid

FROM STAFF REPORTS

DURHAM - Bachelor's degrees earned by 25 N.C. Central University students who attended an unauthorized satellite campus at a suburban Atlanta megachurch are valid, according to the university's accrediting agency.

Belle Wheelan, president of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges, said Tuesday she was satisfied with the response she received from NCCU and the UNC system after the closing of a small collection of undergraduate programs that operated for four years at the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Lithonia, Ga. The pastor there is Eddie Long, an NCCU trustee.

This month, UNC system President Erskine Bowies said he expects NCCU will have to pay back federal financial aid it received from the federal Department of Education and doled out to students at the New Birth program because it wasn't covered by NCCU's accreditation.

The state auditor's office is investigating.
Durham’s legal bills in Duke lacrosse case hit $1.2 million

BY ANNE BLYTHE
STAFF WRITER

DURHAM – Bills from lawyers defending the city against three lawsuits sparked by the Duke lacrosse case have topped $1 million.

By the end of August, the five firms involved in the city’s defense had submitted bills totaling $1.2 million, nearly 60 percent of which Durham taxpayers covered.

Some of that will come back. Kimberly Grantham, assistant city attorney, said the city has sought $229,350 in reimbursements from the American International Group, which owns the insurer the city had in 2006 when the case started. Under the insurance contract, the city was responsible for the first $500,000 and the insurer for the next $5 million.

Grantham said all five firms are billing at below-market rates. The firms are Faison & Gillespie; Poyner & Spruill; Kennon Carver Belo Craig & McKee; Maxwell Freeman & Bowman and Troutman Sanders.

The $1.2 million sum does not include charges from Steptoe & Johnson, the Washington firm AIG brought in to lead the defense team. Its bills do not count against the city’s $5 million cap.

The city is battling lawsuits brought by three different groups of lacrosse players.

Dave Evans, Collin Finnerty and Reade Seligmann, the three charged and then exonerated by the state attorney general, filed suit nearly a year ago.

Another suit was filed in December by three unindicted players; in February, 36 other unindicted players filed suit.

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