THE DAILY CLIPS

October 6, 2010

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

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Auctions leave students worried about housing

BY KATHRYN KENNEDY
The Daily Reflector

It took half an hour Tuesday morning for Fred Holscher to read the list of foreclosed properties for sale on the Pitt County Courthouse steps.

"Never had one that long in 37 years of doing this," the Washington, N.C., attorney said afterward.

Of the nearly 30 properties offered up for auction, all but two are in the neighborhoods around East Carolina University — rental homes managed by local Greenville University Area and G-Ville Holdings corporations. The deed of trust lists the owners as Ann C. Nunez, Tim Ferruzzi, David M. Renn and Rebecca B. Renn.

They sold immediately to the bank holding the mortgage, First South Bank, for more than $4.5 million. The handful of interested parties viewing the auction were told they could contact the bank about individual properties or enter a competing bid for the entire lot within 10 days.

The foreclosure process raised questions for the tenants of those properties, many of whom are students.

ECU Student Legal Services Attorney Peter Romary said he’s been contacted about 40 to 50 foreclosures where students reside in the last two months. His office is dealing with a lack of information, he said, and confu-

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HOUSING
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sion over the reams of legal documents sent to students by law as tenants.

"We just feel like we’re completely (out of the loop) and don’t know what to do," said Kaitlin Faulkner, who lives with two other ECU students in a foreclosed property on East Fourth Street. "It’s all legal jargon."

She said one of her roommates sent a copy to her family’s lawyer, and they debated moving out in the 10-day period their lease allowed before renewing for a second year. They were unable to find alternate housing in that period, she said.

The women want to get out of the lease, if possible, following sale to the bank. Faulkner said a friend of hers had his rental house foreclosed on recently and because he didn’t move in time, he was kicked out.

"That’s really something I don’t want to deal with around finals," she said.

Faulkner said she wasn’t surprised by the foreclosure because of the lack of upkeep by management. A broken washing machine sat on her porch for months, she said.

Shane Linden, a South Summit Street resident with two ECU student roommates, reported similar treatment by the landlords.

"The old company really sucks," he said, explaining that he just moved in and already was experiencing problems with maintenance.

Unlike Faulkner, Linden wants the assurance that he and his roommates will be able to live out their lease.

"We’ve been talking about that non-stop actually," Linden said. "We have no idea what this means or anything."

Linden got an e-mail about where to send the rental check beginning this month and a new maintenance company number, just like Ash Street resident David Mang. He and his two roommates seemed unruffled by the change.

“We just didn’t want to worry with it,” he said, picking up the unopened packet sent by the foreclosure trustee.

Romary said the banks have been good about providing tenants with options. Banks often believe properties will sell faster with tenants intact, because of the guaranteed income, Romary said. Other times, banks see an opportunity to attract a single-family occupant and will offer those living there generous relocation funds.

Those options are further assured by the federal Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act of 2009, which states tenants can stay to the end of their lease unless the home is sold to a new owner or where no lease exists. If either of those conditions exists, they must be given 90 days notice to vacate.

The president of First South Bank could not be reached for comment.

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

Spaulding speaks on leadership

Author and former CEO and president of Up with People Tommy Spaulding spoke Tuesday at Rock Springs Center as part of the Greenville-Pitt Chamber of Commerce's leadership series luncheon.

Spaulding has become a guru of sorts on the topic of leadership. He overcame dyslexia and poor grades in both high school and college to eventually lead Up With People, the largest non-profit organization in the world.

Spaulding told the crowd the story of how he, as an East Carolina University graduate with 2.0 grade-point-average, earned a prestigious Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship to get an MBA in Australia.

He faced competition for the scholarship from Harvard, Yale and Princeton graduates with perfect academic records. But his experience with his roommate in college who was paralyzed in their freshman year and his rejection from 35 law schools pulled at the heart strings of the committee and he got the scholarship.

He said that it was his treatment of the bartender at the hotel where the scholarship committee held interviews that got him the award. The committee was deadlocked between picking Spaulding and a Harvard graduate, when the chairman asked the bartender what he thought.

Spaulding had spent hours talking to the bartender about his life and family while the other applicants ignored him.

"They saw my heart and my passion and they overlooked my grades," he said.

"Every single person has a chance to change the world if you look at life differently and find a way to love everyone."

Spaulding's book "It's not just who you know" was released in August. It describes ways to build important and lasting relationships as part of a successful life.
Pirates get no breaks in tough schedule

The early-season survival test has arrived for East Carolina's football team.

After successive trips and second-half collapses in losses at Virginia Tech and North Carolina, the Pirates now have to visit traditional Conference USA nemesis Southern Miss, followed immediately by a game against N.C. State.

For coach Ruffin McNeill, the only good news is that the game against the Wolfpack will be in Greenville.

In his first season as coach, McNeill is getting a quick, merciless lesson in how much things have changed since he was a Pirates defensive back in the late 1970s.

When McNeill starred on consistently strong indepen-

East Carolina coach Ruffin McNeill is trying to guide the Pirates through the midst of a rough stretch.

TUDOR
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EAST CAROLINA AT SOUTHERN MISS
When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday
Where: Hattiesburg, Miss.
TV: WITN
Radio: WRKX-850, WNCT-1079

dent teams coached by Pat Dye, the Pirates had the advantage of occasionally planting soft spots in the schedule. That concept is impossible for conference teams that "play up" on the side.

In that regard, ECU is the classic example of living between a rock and a hard place among non-BCS conference schools.

Each season, there are two schedules. There's the challenge of competing for the Conference USA East title in addition to balancing the fans' hunger for games against neighboring schools from more powerful conferences.

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UNC's stars in Saturday's 42-17 win over the Pirates included linebacker Bruce Carter from Havelock, running back Shaun Draughn from Tarboro and Kevin Reddick from New Bern. All underscored the importance of taking a second straight win in the series.

"Going back home wouldn't have been much fun if we'd lost this one," Carter said.

Many of State's players will take the same approach to the game on Oct. 16.

Next season, McNeill can expect only more of the same.

The 2011 season is scheduled to begin in Charlotte on Sept. 3 against South Carolina, followed a game against Virginia Tech in Greenville and later a visit from UNC on Oct. 1. The fourth nonconference game – at Navy on Oct. 22 – won't be a bargain, either.

McNeill didn't venture in blindly, of course. He understands the school's scheduling concept and has asked for no relief.

And in truth, next season should be at least somewhat easier if the now widely inexperienced players can get out of 2010 with a decent record and in decent health.

Among the top 22 defensive players on Saturday's defensive depth chart, only four are seniors. On offense, 17 of the top 22 are expected to return.
Blake called Suh's family

Phone records released Tuesday show that former UNC associate head football coach John Blake last year placed calls to agent Gary Wichard's cell phone at times within minutes of calls to the family of prized 2010 draft prospect Ndamukong Suh of Nebraska.

On Monday, University of Nebraska coach Bo Pelini told the Omaha World-Herald that he recalled there being concerns over possible contact between John Blake and Suh during Suh's time as a student-athlete at Nebraska.

The phone records, obtained through an open records request, don't show the content of the phone calls. Blake has denied through lawyers that he steered any player to Wichard or other agents as investigators continue to probe Blake's ties to agents while he coached the Tar Heels.

The disclosure comes after Blake's lawyer acknowledged that Blake received payments from Wichard while on the UNC staff. Blake's connections with the agent have drawn scrutiny since July when UNC disclosed that it was under investigation by the NCAA.

Suh, who was the second selection in this year's NFL draft after being named a finalist for the Heisman Trophy, said Tuesday in an interview that Blake is a good friend and didn't push an agent on him.

Suh said he didn't have any contact with Wichard in the agent process, and Wichard was not one of the final three agents he considered.

"In no instance did he try to push an agent on me of any kind," Suh said.

Suh signed with Eugene Parker and Roosevelt Barnes of Maximum Sports Management on Jan. 27. The Detroit Lions made him the No. 2 pick in the NFL draft on April 22.

The News & Observer obtained the records for Blake's cell phone and desk phone related to six numbers associated with Suh and his family. Previously, the newspapers obtained records of Blake's calls with Wichard.


They show a total of 19 communications between Blake and Suh or his family members. The records do not distinguish between phone calls and text messages.

UNC associate sports information director Kevin Best said school officials didn't know anything about Blake's phone calls to Suh before the
NCAA review and that the calls never came up during the course of the investigation.

Blake and others have talked with investigators from the North Carolina Secretary of State's office. On Tuesday, Wichard spoke to investigators for roughly three hours by teleconference, according to Wichard's lawyer, Howard Silber, who declined further comment to The Associated Press.

Wade Smith, Blake’s Raleigh-based lawyer, said he could not immediately comment. Efforts to reach Silber, were unsuccessful.

Blake’s phone records show him in some cases calling a number for Suh’s sister, Ngum, immediately before or after calling Wichard. For example:

- On Nov. 5, Blake had a one-minute communication with Ngum Suh’s number at 7 p.m. At 7:02 p.m., Blake called Wichard's cell phone and talked for 19 minutes.
- On Dec. 7, Blake had a call for six minutes with Ngum Suh’s number at 7:12 p.m. At 7:18 p.m., Blake called Wichard’s cell phone and talked for 15 minutes.

Records show that Blake continued to call Suh or his family members after Suh selected an agent in late January - all the way through and beyond April's NFL draft.

There were four calls to Suh in February. There was one in March. Blake placed four calls to the family in April, including three on his draft day. Blake also made two calls in June, records show.

Ngum Suh is listed as director of media and philanthropy for "The Agency Sports Management and Marketing" on her brother's website, suh90.com.

She played soccer at Mississippi State when Blake coached there in 2003, and developed a friendship with Blake, according to published reports. Blake coached one season at Mississippi State and served as Nebraska's defensive line coach from 2004 to 2006.

Blake recruited Suh to Nebraska and coached him for two seasons there before joining coach Butch Davis’ staff at North Carolina in December of 2006.

On Monday, Nebraska's Pelini told the World-Herald he remembered a concern over Blake contacting Suh.

Pelini said he asked Jeff Jamrog, Nebraska's assistant athletic director for football, to call North Carolina and handle the matter. Jamrog said he also recalled the instance but did not provide details of contact between the schools. It was unclear whether Nebraska contacted UNC.

"I remember something coming up, but I don't know what the extent of it was," Pelini said.

Suh’s mother, Bernadette Suh, said no one should infer that the phone calls with Blake were about agents.

"We sat down as a family and made our own decision on what agents we wanted to go to," she said. "No one recommended anyone to us."

Asked about the content of the calls, she said that Blake did not try to recommend Wichard to her son.

"It didn't happen," she said. "Even if he did, it's none of your business - it's nobody's business."

Suh is the second high-profile draft prospect outside the North Carolina program with whom Blake has been in contact. Citing unidentified
sources, Yahoo! Sports reported that Alabama defensive tackle Marcell Dareus told NCAA investigators that Blake recommended Wichard to him in a phone conversation last summer. ESPN.com had a similar report based on unnamed sources.

Lawyers for Blake confirmed that he and Dareus spoke about Dareus' ailing mother and the notion that Dareus was being hounded by agents. They did not confirm that Blake spoke with Dareus about Wichard.

Former UNC player Kentwan Balmer has also said through lawyers that Blake did not steer him to sign with an agent. Balmer, now with the Seattle Seahawks, signed with Wichard after the 2007 football season.

Balmer, whose lawyer is also Wichard's lawyer, says in an affidavit that has not been made public but has been provided to investigators that he had approached Blake about Wichard and asked if he knew the agent and what he thought of him.

"In response to those questions," Balmer says in the affidavit, "Coach Blake simply told me that he thought Gary Wichard was a good guy and he was a very successful agent and had been doing it a long time ... at no time did John Blake consult with me in any fashion whatsoever regarding any agent."

Blake's lawyers have acknowledged that Wichard has given Blake money, which they have characterized as loans or gifts to Blake, whom they have said has had financial problems. The most recent exchanges came once in 2008 and twice in 2009 and were represented by the lawyers as gifts to pay for private school tuition for Blake's son, who is Wichard's godson.

Blake resigned on Sept. 5 and was paid a $74,500 buyout.

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Families can afford college if they strategize early

Taking AP tests and applying to community college can help

Families have a tough time paying for college in today's tight economy, but there are things they can do to make college more affordable and attainable.

One key is applying to a variety of schools — public, private, in-state, and a local community college as a backup plan, recommends admissions consultant Katherine Cohen of ApplyWise.com.

In an online survey of 137 families with college-bound students, ApplyWise and media partner NextStepU found that more than a third said it was likely that their child would go to community college for two years, then transfer to a four-year school. In 2008, only 13% said that was likely.

Make sure every school you apply to is one you would be happy to attend, but also make sure you have one you can get into and afford, Cohen says. “You have to think about fit in so many ways.”

It’s also important to start thinking early about how to keep college costs down, such as taking Advanced Placement courses in high school and earning college credit by scoring well on exams. “Taking eight AP exams and scoring 4s and 5s can translate into one year of college” at many colleges and “can decrease your costs by 25%,” she says.

Start saving early, if possible, not only for the cost of attending but also for the cost of applying. “There are a lot of hidden costs — from exam fees to application fees to test prep courses to the costs of visiting colleges — that go into applying to college,” Cohen notes. One-fifth of families surveyed said they have saved nothing for their child’s college education; another fifth said they have saved less than $5,000. “We thought families would have saved more,” Cohen says.

The survey also found that 13% of parents said their child is changing their major to one that might have more income potential at graduation. That’s up from 4.3% of families in 2008.

“Students should pursue their dreams,” Cohen says, but opting for a double major may be one way to do that and add value to your degree.

— Michelle Healy