THE DAILY CLIPS

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ECU receives federal grant for two dental centers

ECU News Services

A grant of $1.76 million will help the East Carolina University School of Dental Medicine build its first two community service learning centers in northeastern North Carolina.

The three-year grant from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration is targeted for the planned centers in Ahoskie and Elizabeth City. The funds will help establish a dental residency program, recruit faculty staff and residents, develop and promote dental practices to underserved patients and provide office and dental equipment for both facilities.

Each center will be a fully functioning general dentistry office with 14 operatories, X-ray equipment, educational spaces and more. Officials are working on the property deeds for the centers and plan to open them by 2012.

"It is especially gratifying to see our success getting the grant since no one at our school has much experience preparing such grant proposals," said Dr. James Hupp, dean of the dental school. "Plus, the team did this work, while preparing for our national accreditation evaluation. Such efforts will help us leverage state funds to replace some that we lost due to the state's budget difficulties."

ECU was one of 14 universities nationwide to receive grants through the competitive application process. Dr. Gregory Chadwick, associate dean for planning and extramural affairs, led ECU's application process.

A full-time dental school faculty member will staff each center, along with dental hygienists and other staff members. Fourth-year dental students and residents will train at the centers. Chadwick has described the centers as similar to "moving the fourth floor of the dental school — the clinical training — off campus to rural areas of our state where dental services are needed."

A third center is planned for Sylva in western North Carolina's Jackson County. A total of 10 centers will be built in underserved areas across the state at sites to be determined.

The School of Dental Medicine has begun its accreditation process and is interviewing its first group of applicants. The school plans to admit its first students next fall, with plans to admit 50 students each year. The N.C. General Assembly has provided about $90 million in funding for construction of the school.

Social network for ridesharing launches

ECU has partnered with Zimride to launch a social network for ridesharing. The Zimride platform uses Facebook to create a way to find others to share commutes or one-time rides. The private network allows individual to join together and potentially reduce campus traffic and parking difficulties.

"Zimride is a great way to save money and help protect the environment," said Bill Koch, ECU associate vice chancellor of Environmental Health and Campus Safety. "We're thrilled to offer this innovative solution to our students, faculty and staff."

Zimride has developed a custom rideshare solution for ECU's campus. Through Zimride's Web-based interface, faculty, staff and students can find others with similar commuting patterns or destinations. As a social network platform with optional Facebook integration, Zimride allows users to view profiles for common networks, interests and friends before deciding to share a ride with someone.

University students, faculty and staff can access the ECU Zimride website at http://zimride.ecu.edu. The system requires an ECU PirateID username and password to gain access.

Chamber Singers release second CD

The award-winning ECU Chamber Singers have released "Eternal Light," their second professional compact disc recording.

Recorded in St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Greenville and internationally distributed on the Gothic recording label, the recording features mostly 20th-century sacred works for
an unaccompanied choir.

In addition, three selections are "world premiere" recordings of works for choir with single-instrument obbligato featuring instrumental faculty members, Christopher Grymes, clarinet, and Christine Gustafson, flute. The major premiere is a 25 minute four-movement setting of the Angus Dei by Norwegian composer Egil Hovland and featuring Christopher Ulffer, bassoon.

In an interview with distribution partner Naxos, Roger Sherman, production engineer and manager of Gothic Records, called the CD "truly one of the most beautiful recordings we have ever made."

Recordings can be purchased through most online classical music recording distributors, including the Gothic Records website (www.gothic-catalog.com/Eternal_Light_p/g-49272.htm), or at the ECU School of Music office.

Two faculty members named to state posts

Dr. Stephen W. Thomas, dean of the College of

See NOTES, B7

NOTES
Continued from B6

Allied Health Sciences, will serve on a state committee examining the effect of federal health reform legislation on North Carolina.

The effort will be led by Lanier Cansler, secretary of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, and Wayne Goodwin, commissioner of the N.C. Department of Insurance and state fire marshal.

Eight groups have been established: prevention, safety net, health professional workforce, health insurance exchange and oversight, Medicaid, new models of care, quality, and fraud and abuse. Thomas will serve on the health professional workforce committee.

The goal is to identify decisions the state must make in implementing health reform, and to identify potential funding opportunities to improve state residents’ health, access to care and health care quality.

A report will be finalized in August.

Gregg D. Givens, chairman of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders in the College of Allied Health Sciences, has been elected to a three-year term on the board of directors of the National Council of State Boards of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology.

The council’s mission is to facilitate the role of state licensure boards through communication and education, to promote protection of consumers and to provide an avenue for national discussion of licensure and its relationship to the evolving professions of speech-language pathology and audiology.

Upcoming Events:

- Tuesday: "How Shipwrecks Shaped the Destiny of the Outer Banks," presented by author Kevin Duffus, 7 p.m., Greenville Country Club. Free. This is a Friends of Joyner Library event and open to the public.

See www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/calendar.cfm for times, places and more information on these events and other ECU upcoming activities.

CONT...
DR. GREG CHADWICK, associate dean for planning and extramural affairs for the ECU School of Dental Medicine, led the university’s application process to secure a $1.75 million grant to build its first two community service learning centers.

THE THIRD ANNUAL peace.love.pirates.cure event held Wednesday was aimed at educating ECU students about living a healthy, cancer-free life. In addition to cancer prevention displays, attendees were encouraged to put their handprints on a banner that will hang in the Student Recreation Center. Savannah Smith, left, and Brooke Titus add their prints.
Artist calms nerves with warm handshake, generous smile

Tiny pink plastic sample spoons from Baskin Robbins, broken forks, bread tags and plant identification tags, pen caps and milk jug rings, die and even part of a Crest toothpaste tube. Dozens of these items, all equally colorful, hang from metal rings.

What would sound like some to be a collection of recyclable garbage, artist Bob Ebendorf saw as a piece of jewelry. He called it “Off the Street, From the Beach.”

I have a tattered and worn 2004 postcard of this Ebendorf piece at my work desk. It was sent to me when the metalsmith had a 40-year retrospective of his work at the Racine Art Museum in Wisconsin.

The reason for keeping the postcard is twofold: I like the piece, and it reminds me of one of my very first interviews as a features writer with The Daily Reflector.

I interviewed him for a story when a retrospective of his art was held at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.

Ebendorf lives in Greenville and is East Carolina University’s Carol Grotnes Belk Distinguished Professor of Art.

I recall being nervous prior to arriving at his downtown Greenville home. But my nerves were quickly dispelled with a warm handshake, a cozy home and a generous smile.

We sat and talked about his life; how he struggled in school because of dyslexia, his education at the University of Kansas where he earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in fine art and how he views the world with his artistic eyes.

“Off the Street, From the Beach” is an example of what Ebendorf sees as art. His artist statement says that he collects.

See EBENDORF, E2

EBENDORF

Continued from E1

found objects for materials and inspiration because they each have their own patina of history and can be evocative.

He’s been a part of the studio jewelry movement since the early 1960s and was the recipient of a Fulbright Grant to study in Norway in 1963 and three years later was awarded a Louis Comfort Tiffany Grant to work for Norway Silver Design.

His art has been on display worldwide and featured in numerous books, and he gives workshops both domestically and internationally. Thursday night in Raleigh, Ebendorf was honored with the North Carolina Award in Fine Art for his significant contributions to our state and the nation. It’s the highest civilian honor that the state gives annually.

But regardless of his tremendous success, Ebendorf was soft-spoken, thoughtful and a gracious host.

He showed me his workbench; a tinkerer’s haven of broken bits of this and that, fishing lures, pieces of gold and silver, vintage brooches, a rainbow of stones ... so much to look at that I’m not sure I could have digested it all in one day.

He showed me how to cut a sheet of silver, what he might do next with a piece and explained how it may develop into the final work of art. He made it seem simple and uncomplicated.

A gleam in his eye made it clear that he truly loves what he does.

Contact Kelley Kirk at kkirk@reflector.com or (252) 329-9596.
Family Fare series introduces young audiences to the performing arts

BY KIM GRIZZARD
The Daily Reflector

At a time when a growing number of movie theaters and restaurants are making efforts to ban young children, East Carolina University is working to attract them.

The university hopes to bring in children as young as 4 — by the hundreds — to attend live performances. It’s all part of the Family Fare series, which is designed to introduce young audiences to theater. All performances are presented in Wright Auditorium on the ECU campus.

“This is a great training ground,” said Michael Crane, assistant dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication at ECU. “It’s much more informal.”

Family Fare aims to be an initiation of sorts to performing arts, introducing children to general theater behavior such as remaining quiet during a performance and applauding at the end of an act. But audience members whose feet don’t touch the floor are forgiven if they come up short on some of the finer points of decorum, and some rules of theater etiquette are disregarded altogether. Audience members may be invited to interact with actors during a performance or even wear a costume of their own to a show.

“If there’s a child who can’t sit still, let him watch it from the back; we don’t care,” Crane said. “As long as it’s not a major disruption, it’s a good teaching tool.”

The entire series is designed to be educational, providing lessons on music, literature, culture and even science. The accompanying Arts Smart series, performed in the morning for schoolchildren from seven eastern North Carolina counties, include a teacher’s guide for each show.

Returning Family Fare and Arts Smart performers include ECU’s own Storybook Theatre company and the Kennedy Center Theatre for Young Audiences on Tour. New to the series are Mad Science, which will open the season with “CSI: LIVE!” and Birmingham Children’s Theatre, which will perform “Zorro” in the fall and “Beauty and the Beast” in the spring.

With six shows, this year’s series includes two more productions than recent Family Fare seasons.

“What’s happened is ECU Storybook Theatre does such a nice job that we want to support them for two productions a year for as long as they’re willing,” Crane said. “Really we love the titles they pick. They’re always literature-based and also they’re so interactive for the audience members.

“Four slots wasn’t enough,” he said. “We needed to expand.”

This year’s series includes:

‘CSI: LIVE!’
7 p.m. Oct. 15.

Presented by Mad Science, “CSI: LIVE!” is an interactive journey through the world of crime scene investigations. When a crime is committed at the premiere of a Las Vegas magic show, Sydney Mathis and David Hart play the roles of CSI investigators. With the help of supervisor Gil Grissom and input from the audience, they will use their forensic know-how to investigate the evidence and test their theories. Whether it’s analyzing mysterious gases, launching experimental projectiles or firing lasers across the scene of the crime, the CSI team will work together to solve the crime. The production is recommended for ages 8 and older.

‘The Legend of Sleepy Hollow’
7 p.m. Oct. 29

On Halloween weekend, ECU Storybook Theatre will present Washington Irving’s classic American tale of the journey of Ichabod Crane. This beloved story features a suspenseful, age-old mystery.

“It’s got lots of humor in it and some music and some dance,” said Patricia Clark, an associate professor in the School of Theatre and Dance and director of Storybook Theatre. “There’s something in it for everybody. I don’t think it’s that scary. I don’t think it will frighten any of the children.”

The production is recommended

See THEATER, E2

Cont...
THEATER
Continued from E1

for ages 8 and older. Audience members may come in costume and participate in a character parade after the show.

“This is a traditional Halloween story,” Clark said. “It’s a perfect way to celebrate Halloween.”

‘Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Musical’
7 p.m. Feb. 18
On what was to be a quick trip to the Laundromat with Daddy, Trixie, and her beloved Knuffle Bunny, things go horribly, hilariously wrong. Based on his beloved Caldecott Honor-winning picture book, six-time Emmy Award winner Mo Willems joins Grammy

Award-winning composer Michael Silvershine for this performance, which includes adventure, song, and gigantic dancing laundry. This performance, by the Kennedy Center Theatre for Young Audiences on Tour, is recommended for ages 4 and older.

‘Seussical’
7 p.m. March 18
ECU Storybook Theatre will present favorite Dr. Seuss tales all rolled into one in this musical theatre production. One of the most highly acclaimed shows in America, “Seussical” includes some of the best loved characters: Horton the Elephant, Gertrude McFuzz, lazy Mayzie, and, of course, the Cat in the Hat. “Seussical” is a favorite of everybody’s, Clark said. “Dr. Seuss has so many wonderful stories to share.”
The production is recommended for ages 5 and older.

‘Beauty and the Beast’
7 p.m. April 1
Twenty years after the Disney animated classic was released, “Beauty and the Beast” remains a popular stage show.
Set in an enchanted castle in a far-away land, the magical tale features a young beauty who has been locked away with a terrible beast. In this new adaptation of the classic fairy tale, a young woman’s love for a hideous beast ultimately becomes a gift of kindness that brings magical results.
The production is recommended for ages 5 and older.

‘Zorro’
7 p.m. Nov. 12
Founded in 1947, Birmingham Children’s Theatre has grown to become one of America’s largest professional theatres for young audiences.

The touring company, which is new to the Family Fare series, has performed for more than 12 million students in six decades.

“Zorro,” based on the 1919 novella “The Curse of Capistrano,” by Johnston McCulley, focuses on Hispanic culture and the history of settling the missions of California. The show features Hispanic music, dance and costumes. The production is recommended for ages 6 and older.
Phi Gamma Delta celebrates chapter charter

BY JOSH HUMPHRIES
The Daily Reflector

The Delta colony of Phi Gamma Delta at East Carolina University will be chartered as the new Pi Nu chapter at a special ceremony at the Hilton Greenville today.

For Dick Greene, the charter represents the culmination of a long association with the fraternity.

Greene graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1948 as a "Phi Gam." For the last 10 years, he has helped organize reunions of Phi Gamma Delta brothers in Greenville, where he lives.

"Eastern North Carolina is the hottest spot in the country for Phi Gams," Greene said.

The reunions, which started in 2000, grew from eight brothers to more than 100 during the last decade. There are Phi Gamma Delta chapters all over the country with four in North Carolina at N.C. State, UNC-Wilmington, Davidson College and UNC-Chapel Hill.

The fraternity was founded at Jefferson College, Pennsylvania, in 1848.

Phi Gams often stay in contact with each other and with current college students wherever they live.

See PHI GAMMA, B3

PHI GAMMA
Continued from B1

all ties into the fraternity's motto of "Not for college days alone."

Phi Gamma Delta has had a presence at ECU since February of 2009 when the fraternity started a colony. Now the colony will reach full charter status, thanks to the help of Phi Gamma Delta alumni, said ECU Phi Gamma president Hunter Peyton.

The ECU chapter has 42 members and 16 pledges including three top members of the Student Government Association on campus. The colony also has the highest grade point average of any fraternity at ECU and won the 2009-10 Community Commitment Award after establishing presence at ECU.

Peyton said the involvement of graduates is very important to the fraternity's growth and one of the things that makes it stand out.

"They want you to talk to them like they are your brother instead of your elder," Peyton said. "There are always networking possibilities out there."

For Greene, who is 83, reuniting with old friends and watching young students carry the torch has been very rewarding.

"This reunion has had a life of its own," Greene said. "It has been spoken about in 50 states. Nothing has been as unique and successful as this."

The reunions were originally restricted to members who graduated before 1955, some of whom hadn't seen each other in 50 years.

Greene said enjoying the work to make it happen is what has made the reunions so rewarding.

"It takes a togetherness — anytime you put on something, if you don't have somebody that was working together, it really doesn't work," Greene said.

"Eastern North Carolina is the hottest spot in the country for Phi Gams."

Dick Greene
Phi Gamma Delta member
Norris named executive director of Public School Forum

Jo Ann Norris, a member of the East Carolina University Educators Hall of Fame, will become only the second executive director in the 25-year history of the Public School Forum. She will replace John Dornan, the founding executive director, who is retiring in February. Norris is associate executive director of the forum.

"Jo Ann Norris has been with the organization almost from the beginning," Barbara Allen, chairwoman of the forum's board, said. "She has been in charge of the Teaching Fellows Program, which has grown to be a model program for other states. She has worked with policy-makers in the General Assembly and on the State Board of Education, and she has been part of designing all of the forum's major programs. We believe she is the ideal person to lead the forum into its next 25 years."

Prior to her work with the Public School Forum, Norris had a distinguished teaching career that culminated with being named the North Carolina State Teacher of the Year. She then worked in the Governmental Affairs Department of the N.C. Association of Educators. She is a former chairwoman of the North Carolina Women's Forum.

"I am honored to be given the opportunity to lead the forum," Norris said, "but I am also keenly aware of what it will take to keep the organization relevant and move it to a higher level of performance. Never has there been more of a demand to make our schools what they could and should be for the young people of North Carolina, and I am determined that the forum will make a large contribution to make our schools second to none."

The Public School Forum's range of programs beyond the Teaching Fellows Program includes the N.C. Center for Afterschool Programs, which networks hundreds of public and private afterschool programs; the Institute for Educational Policymakers, which sponsors seminars and conferences on critical education issues and provides elected officials a steady stream of information about best practices in education; and the Collaborative Project, a five-county initiative focused on student improvement in some of the state's smallest and poorest counties.

The organization is best known for its research and recommendations aimed at improving schools in North Carolina. Forum recommendations have led to the establishment of the state's School Technology Fund, supplemental funding for poor and small schools and a number of issues related to teachers and teaching.
NEWS

Caregivers find comfort during Alzheimer’s Walk & Education Fair

By CHRIST PROKOS
Staff Writer
Published: Sunday, October 10, 2010 2:20 AM EDT

When it comes to Alzheimer’s Disease, most experts agree that effective treatment starts with education and exercise.

Both were available at the Alzheimer’s Walk and Education Fair at the Improved Order of the Redmen Tau Tribe #18 building Saturday.

The event, organized by Alzheimer’s North Carolina, Inc., provided information and support for families in eastern North Carolina coping with Alzheimer’s Disease and other dementias.

Dr. Irene Hamrick, who specializes in geriatric family medicine at East Carolina University’s Brody School of Medicine, was on hand to announce a research grant from the John and Harriet Wooten Laboratory for Alzheimer’s and Neurodegenerative Disease Research.

“There are so many people involved with treating and supporting someone with Alzheimer’s,” Hamrick said. “From the caregivers to the doctors, pharmacists, physical therapists, occupational therapists and the public.”

The Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office offered support to caregivers through its Care Trak Program. Patients are fitted with a battery-powered transmitter on a wristband that proves critical if they become lost and disoriented. Deputies use a receiver to locate the patient and return them home.

“The one great challenge is getting people to use it,” Sheriff Alan Jordan said. “It greatly increases the odds of getting (the patient) back safely and quickly. And it is not just for Alzheimer’s patients but anyone with cognitive issues.”

The only cost to the patient and caregiver is roughly $10 a month for a new wrist strap and battery.

“People will wander and they are not seen again,” Jordan said. “It is much more cost effective but whatever the cost, we need to spend it to get them back safely.”
Caregivers at the fair received critical information about diagnosis, treatment and behavior management of Alzheimer’s patients from social service agencies, legal aid professionals, home health agencies and nursing home representatives.
Doctor's pay secures UNC heart center

CHAPEL HILL It cost a lot for UNC Hospitals to retain heart surgeon Brett Sheridan. But letting him go would have proved far costlier.

That was Bill Roper's thinking in August when he approved a $335,000 raise that brought Sheridan's salary to $600,000 - more than a heart surgeon has ever earned at UNC.

To Roper, the UNC Health Care System's CEO, the raise was a no-brainer. Though he knows big raises draw scrutiny at a time when most public employees have flat salaries, Roper also knows the blow to revenue and reputation his hospital would have suffered had Sheridan, its sole heart surgeon, left.

The issue shows the struggle a public hospital faces as it tries to balance lofty aspirations with expensive public obligations.

Had it lost Sheridan, UNC Hospitals would have been temporarily unable to do heart transplants, valve replacements and other sophisticated surgical procedures that are lucrative revenue sources. Even if a replacement was hired, it could have taken as long as a year for the hospital to become re-certified.

"I'm sorry if it upsets some people," said Roper, also a physician. "But I have to live in the real world. It is simply not an option to shut down heart surgery at UNC Hospitals."

Sheridan's salary comes from clinical revenue, not taxpayer dollars.

Of a total operating budget of $990 million, UNC Health Care will this year receive $36 million from the state. That's down from $43 million a year ago. Meanwhile, the university expects to provide about $300 million in uncompensated care, officials say.

"It is stunning that we could have been out of the heart business," UNC system President Erskine Bowles said. "It is just a perfect example of what we're having to deal with in every area of health care."

More 'charity' care

The private hospitals UNC competes with for heart patients and other customers generally have lesser obligations to people who can't pay. UNC's 2009 "charity" care - treatment given to customers who can't pay - totaled $135 million. By comparison, Duke University Health System reported $47.7 million in charity care, and WakeMed reported about $70 million.
All of which means UNC needs its clinical revenue to stream in without interruption. And last year, Sheridan performed 116 surgeries that accounted for $1.3 million, health care system officials say. Those surgeries, some of which were part of UNC’s charity care, included 19 heart transplants and the insertion of 23 ventricular assist devices, the mechanical gizmos that help the heart pump properly.

Above-average salary

For all of that, Sheridan is now earning slightly more than most heart surgeons, according to one study. The average salary for a cardiac or thoracic surgeon is $533,084, according to a national compensation survey by the American Medical Group Association.

But salaries can range broadly. New surgeons in some parts of the nation start far lower, while more experienced ones with stellar reputations could earn far more, particularly in more expensive regions of the country, said Fred Grover, a University of Colorado-Denver heart surgeon and past president of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons.

The $600,000 salary doesn’t seem unreasonable, said Grover, who has known the UNC surgeon since Sheridan did intern and residency training in Colorado from 1992 to 2002. "If he's a busy surgeon with a good reputation, that's a believable number," Grover said, "though most don't make it."

Second surgeon sought

UNC is recruiting a second surgeon to join Sheridan; that person likely will earn about $600,000 as well, Roper said. Until then, Sheridan goes it alone, often providing care to North Carolinians who can't afford it.

"There are thousands of people who have these problems and have nowhere else to go," said UNC President Emeritus William Friday, who received a heart valve replacement from Sheridan in 2009. "He has plenty of work to do."

UNC doesn't want to cede any ground in the lucrative heart market to Duke University. In addition, Rex Healthcare, the Raleigh hospital owned by UNC, is planning to build its own heart center. That center will feed more complex heart patients to Chapel Hill and create new competition for WakeMed, which controls the heart business in Wake County.

When UNC hires a second heart surgeon, that department will be fully staffed, Roper said. By comparison, Duke has 11 adult heart surgeons and WakeMed has nine, representatives for those hospitals said.

Keeping momentum

Sheridan came to UNC in 2002. He is an associate professor of surgery and UNC Hospitals' director of adult cardiac surgery.

This past summer, he was offered a job in the western United States that would have paid far more than the $600,000 he now earns, UNC officials say. The specifics aren't publicly known. UNC officials declined to give details, and Sheridan could not be reached for this story.
Sheridan essentially would have taken UNC's heart surgery accreditation with him had he left, and the public and private agencies that pay insurance claims would have had to recertify the hospital once it hired a new surgeon.

During the recertification process, patients would have been sent elsewhere, and UNC would have lost momentum and revenue, though some of the procedures could have been farmed out to Rex.

The loss would have rippled broadly, said Grover, the Colorado surgeon. Along with the loss of patients, an unstaffed heart surgery department would have affected hospital training programs, medical students and residents seeking specialized training. And the hospital's reputation would have been diminished, Grover said.

"It shakes the whole place up," he said. "One person walking out won't destroy the place, but it would wound it."

Staff writer Alan M. Wolf contributed to this report.

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Drug suspected in deaths of men found on fire escape

RALEIGH Two college-age friends found dead on a Hillsborough Street fire escape last week may have taken mephedrone, a little-known designer drug often called "meow-meow" that is frequently marketed online as plant food, Raleigh police said.

The news capped a week of mourning for the friends and families of Ray Ausbon, 21, and Zac Tigner, 19, a pair of Apex High School graduates discovered on the morning of Oct. 2 - just two days before Tigner was to join the U.S. Army.

Police spokesman Jim Sughrue stressed that police are still awaiting autopsy results to conclude how the young men died, but the preliminary investigation points to mephedrone. The drug has little or no history in Raleigh, Sughrue said, and Tigner's and Ausbon's deaths appear to be the first time police have encountered it here.

Police issued a strong caution against using mephedrone, listing common street names such as "drone," "bubbles" and "bounce."

Ausbon's father, Doug Ausbon of Apex, also emphasized that medical tests that will confirm how his son died are not complete, but he repeated the police's warning.

"What they've done is done, and we can't do anything about it," he said of his son and his friend. "Let's make sure nobody else will stand in these shoes. No more grieving families."
A fun-loving pair

Ausbon and Tigner met through Apex United Methodist Church and had legions of friends who called them fun-loving and enjoyable company.

Ausbon was an Eagle Scout, lifeguard and honor student who majored in accounting at N.C. State University. Fellow Scout Nick Pappas recalled Ausbon pushing him to make Eagle Scout, and comforting him when he got homesick at camp. He was also prone to wearing a banana suit, which Pappas could explain only by saying, "Ray was a trip."

High school friend Stephen Barbour noted that cliques were everywhere, but Ausbon didn't belong to any of them. He talked to everybody. His family estimates that 1,000 people came to Ausbon's viewing, taking five hours to say goodbye. "He was our s-o-n Ray," said Ausbon's mother, Sherri. "But he was everyone else's s-u-n-Ray."

Tigner was an avid soccer player, both at Apex High and at Gardner-Webb University. Friends recalled his joking and easy manner, and that he could perk up the gloomiest day and make even the most stubborn person laugh.

"The last time I had been around Zac was at the Apex UMC Christmas tree lot a few years back," Barbour said. "I was helping him and his dad, and it was one of the best times I've ever had, even though I was freezing my butt off the whole time."

Several friends from Gardner-Webb noted, though, that Tigner was no stranger at a party. He didn't always conform to the strict rules of a private Christian college. "He was a really lively guy, always the life of the party," said Jordan Love, who knew him through soccer friends. "He was always kind of pushing his limits."

'The new ecstasy?'

The words mephedrone and "meow meow" were new to many ears Friday in Raleigh.

"I've never heard of it," said Sara McEwen, executive director of the Governor's Institute on Alcohol & Drug Abuse.

Most popular among young people in Europe, where it is illegal in several countries, the drug is marketed over the Internet as plant food, bath salts and a research chemical, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. In January,
an article in The Times of London asked, "Is Meow Meow the new ecstasy?" a reference to the popular designer drug.

Taken to create intense but short-lived euphoria, it can increase heart rate, cause chest pains and force vomiting. One confirmed and several suspected deaths have been reported in Europe, the DOJ said.

Ausbon and Tigner were alone on the night they died, Ausbon's mother said. "His friend was leaving," she said.

Now, with both gone, thousands are grieving.

Staff researcher Brooke Cain contributed to this report.

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The stormy lives of blue crabs

David Eggleston tracks advancing storms like any other North Carolinian fearful of flooding, felled trees and power outages. But whenever one of the powerful storms takes aim at North Carolina's coast, Eggleston's dread is also tinged with excitement.

As head of the Center for Marine Science and Technology in Morehead City, the N.C. State University professor knows hurricanes can affect a critter that plays a key economic and ecological role in the Pamlico and Albemarle sounds - the blue crab.

Hurricanes can either help or hurt the size of blue crab populations, depending on a storm's strength, Eggleston and his students have discovered.

For the past 10 years, Eggleston's students - including NCSU teams from marine, earth and atmospheric sciences, plus a slew of local high schoolers - have collected daily samples of immature crabs during the peak of the hurricane season in August, September and October.

Results of this first-of-its-kind survey were published in August and provided a clue to a mystery that has worried biologists, ecologists and fishery experts: the dwindling number of mature blue crabs being harvested in North Carolina's estuaries, particularly in the Pamlico Sound.

"I'm fascinated with hurricanes," Eggleston said. "I look at them in terms of the ecosystem ... as a huge forcing event that can lead to a tipping point."

Storms can help crabs

Eggleston started sampling the crab populations in 1996. Thirty-five tropical storms hit, brushed or skirted the state's coastline while the survey was under way - including Floyd, one of the largest and most destructive storms to travel along the East Coast before it made landfall Sept. 16, 1999, near Cape Fear.

The survey results showed for the first time that less powerful hurricanes, including Earl in September, help boost the population of mature blue crabs in North Carolina's estuaries. The storms act like a turbocharger in the crab's journey to maturity and fertility.

But big storms such as Floyd tend to disrupt that journey, which worries Eggleston if predictions hold true that global climate change may bring more frequent and powerful Atlantic hurricanes.
The survey was pioneering research in another respect, too.

In the second half of the 1990s, scientists were paying a lot more attention to blue crabs in the Chesapeake Bay than to their crustacean brethren in the Pamlico and Albemarle sounds.

Although the blue crab harvest in the Chesapeake dropped by about half during the 1990s, blue crab populations in the Pamlico and Albemarle sounds boomed. In 1996, N.C. crabbers harvested a record 62.5 million pounds, filling plates in Maryland, Virginia and beyond.

By 2000, however, North Carolina's blue crab bonanza was suddenly gone. Except for a short-lived blip in 2008, annual harvests have gotten progressively smaller, according to the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries.

Because blue crabs remain the most important catch for North Carolina's commercial fishery - they generated 35 percent of the industry's $77 million in sales last year - state fishery regulators are wondering what's to blame for the decade-long decrease.

Eggleston's survey results provide an interesting piece in the puzzle, but much remains unclear, said Dan Rittschof, an associate zoology professor and blue crab expert at Duke University.

"The blue crab is the most confusing of the species I've worked with," Rittschof said.

Many variables involved

For one, North Carolina blue crabs live in the second largest U.S. estuary - second only to Chesapeake Bay. Several coastal river basins and marshes drain into the shallow sounds behind the Outer Banks.

Unlike Chesapeake Bay, which is deeper and more affected by tides, the Pamlico and Albemarle sounds are influenced by wind. Hurricanes and nor'easters can significantly change water currents and salinity in the sounds, which in turn affect blue crab populations and North Carolina's commercial fishing industry.

"It all depends on where it hits and when, and how much rain falls," said Lynn Henry, a marine biologist with the state's marine fisheries division. "There are so many variables involved, it's mind-boggling."

And then there's the blue crab's life cycle.

Adult blue crabs live in the silty shallows and the sea-grass beds of the North Carolina sounds, where they are the main bottom-dwelling predators of clams, worms, dead fish and other crabs.

Female blue crabs can spawn twice in the two to three years they live and release up to 2 million eggs at a time. The spawning season starts in March and peaks in late August and September.
Egg-carrying female blue crabs migrate to the mouths of the N.C. estuary system, where the larvae hatch. Currents then wash the larvae out into the ocean.

Up to 60 days later, larvae transform into megalopea, immature blue crabs about the size of ticks. Megalopea largely rely on tide, wind and storms to pass the inlets along the Outer Banks and return to the estuary. Once they’re back, they molt and become young blue crabs.

Devastated by Floyd

During the 1999 hurricane season, Floyd and its predecessor Dennis dumped so much rain on coastal North Carolina that fresh water diluted the salinity of the shallow sounds.

As a result, masses of mature blue crabs migrated eastward from the Neuse and Pamlico rivers into the saltier Pamlico Sound, and crabbers had banner harvests, Eggleston said. Meanwhile, large numbers of megalopausal-stage blue crabs that the hurricanes had pushed into the diluted estuary waters died.

In 2000, blue crab harvests declined nearly 30 percent in the Pamlico and Albemarle sounds, state fishery officials reported.

The 2007 harvest was the lowest since N.C. regulators introduced a new reporting system in 1994, despite protection efforts.

Why the harvests continue to shrink isn't really clear, said Henry, the state marine biologist.

"We're dealing with environmental and weather variables that are different every day," he said. "It's very difficult to pin down."

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Walden cited for public service

CHAPEL HILL N.C. State University economist Michael Walden was finishing up a presentation with some local government folks in Whiteville earlier this year when a spectator thanked him for coming and asked if he was just passing through on his way to the beach.

The man was amazed - and appreciative - that Walden had driven all the way to this small town in southeastern North Carolina specifically to help some government officials get a handle on economic issues.

"That was just the best compliment I could get," Walden recounted Friday as he accepted the UNC system's highest award for public service.

You may not know many economists, but you've probably heard of Walden or seen his face on TV. He has become a perpetual presence in the North Carolina media, a go-to expert on economic matters. His name appears often in this newspaper and elsewhere; in his 32 years on the NCSU faculty, Walden has carved out a niche as the state's public economist, offering his expertise in radio, television and newspaper interviews and in 1,200 public workshops.

'A public asset'

He has written 700 columns and appeared on more than 600 television programs, usually breaking complicated economic principles into easily digestible parts.

"I think he is viewed as a tremendous public asset because he has such a broad knowledge of the state's economy," said Randy Woodson, NCSU's chancellor.

Walden is the fourth recipient of an award created by the UNC system's Board of Governors earlier this decade to cast a spotlight on the public service efforts of its faculty. It comes with a $7,500 cash prize.

Walden is a graduate of the University of Cincinnati and Cornell University.
He left the icy North in 1978. When he arrived in Raleigh for his job interview that winter, his soon-to-be department head wore short sleeves when he picked Walden up at the airport.

"I was impressed with the weather," he recalled.

**Government resource**

So he stayed and became a resource for legislators, governors and local government leaders. He has written eight books and does an economics-based radio show. And he has offered advice to study commissions, task forces and public policy groups. The state commerce department has used his economic models in recruiting businesses to the state, and his recommendations have shaped changes to state and local tax laws.

"I have tried in my career to empower people," Walden said. "Economics can be a contentious subject matter. Politics and economics often get intertwined. I've tried to keep them separate."

UNC President Erskine Bowles worked with Walden when the economist was involved in the work of the UNC Tomorrow Commission, which identified how the UNC system should meet the state's changing needs.

"He has done more to motivate and encourage public officials and public interest groups with the facts," Bowles said Friday during Walden's award presentation. "I'd give anything to have faculty like you throughout the UNC system."

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Affluent Indians Sending More Students Abroad

By VIR SINGH

NEW DELHI — When Rohit Bhasin recently arrived in India after eight years away, he was taken aback by the number of homes, roads and bridges being built.

"The first thing I noticed stepping off here was, ‘There’s so much spending going on,’” said Mr. Bhasin, assistant director of admissions at the Massachusetts School of Law.

Recruiters from U.S. universities and colleges like Mr. Bhasin heard a similar message from the organizers of an education fair in New Delhi last month, just hours before they met with prospective students.

“I’ve been seeing on the news that this year, there’s 17 more billionaires than there were before,” said Sara Morgan, referring to an annual list of India’s richest people compiled by Forbes magazine.

Ms. Morgan, who is assistant director of graduate admissions at Emerson College in Boston, said recruiters like her had been told that apart from the ultrarich, “there is going to be an even greater upper class” that, like its Chinese counterpart, can afford to pay for an overseas education. “That’s an even better opportunity for U.S. schools.”

Education experts say this increasing affluence, and a shortage of top-quality colleges and universities in India, is likely to send more students abroad, despite the fact that two out of five Indians live in grinding poverty.

“There is a steadily increasing number of families who don’t blink when we tell them what the bill is going to be,” said Renuka Raja Rao, country coordinator of the United States-India Educational Foundation, which organized the fair along with the Institute of International Education. “I expect this will grow as the economy continues to grow at a fast clip.”

But the recruiters say that U.S. colleges and universities, including those that have long played host to Indian students, are learning that they cannot simply sit back and expect enrollments to grow but must increasingly rely on recruiters who travel to India, China and other
countries.

"In the past, it's not something my institution has done a lot of," said Dawna Rhoades, associate dean of research and graduate studies at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. "Earlier, there were just two people for the whole world. Now, we have a director of international admissions with two full-time staff."

Besides them, the university relies on Ms. Rhoades, who teaches business courses, and other faculty members to meet with students in key markets. "We've tapped our domestic market as much as we can," she said.

At the university fair, held at a local cultural center, Ms. Rhoades fielded questions ranging from course content to the weather in Florida, where one of the university's two campuses is located; the other is in Arizona. Some students wanted to know how many Indians lived on campus. Others asked about where graduates had managed to find jobs.

Students, some accompanied by their parents, moved through displays highlighting degrees in psychology, art, design and journalism — reflecting a much broader range than the computer science, engineering and business studies that continue to top the list of subjects Indian students choose.

While about 70 percent of Indians still go to the United States for graduate programs, institutions there are increasingly going after undergraduates, said Swaraj Nandan, a director at KIC UnivAssist, an organization that helps students applying to U.S. programs and also advises recruiters.

The reason for that is simple: "Most of the undergrads who go across are those who pay for their tuition," he said. So while universities may want to attract students at both levels, "most admission committees focus on undergrads."

To help his clients find students, Mr. Nandan not only considers where an institution has drawn students from historically, but he also uses data from surveys that rank the most affluent Indian cities. New Delhi is at the top, while Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Calcutta and Chennai also figure on the list. Even so, U.S. colleges are "slowly" trying to expand these efforts to include, for instance, some of the country's leading boarding schools, Mr. Nandan said.

Audra Cryder, international representative at the University of Kentucky, said her institution had advertised on Web sites frequented by Indian students. "We also announce our forthcoming visits on the Web sites and encourage interested students to meet with us in person," she said.

And that, said Mr. Bhasin of the Massachusetts School of Law, is key to closing a deal. "Until and unless you come here and be in front of them, no one is going to return your e-mail."