THE DAILY CLIPS

October 12, 2009

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

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ECU Notes: Biotech Center loan helps ECU entrepreneur get noticed

ECU News Services

Sunday, October 11, 2009

Gabe Dough and his new company, Shure Foods, are creating a buzz in some North Carolina entrepreneurial circles.

Dough, an MBA student at East Carolina University, got a $30,000 low-interest company inception loan from the North Carolina Biotechnology Center to pursue his dream of commercializing a new way to process and sell the meat of swimming crabs such as the highly prized blue version frequently captured in North Carolina coastal waters.

Biotechnology is the use of living cells and their molecules to solve problems and make useful products. Shure Foods uses proprietary materials such as fibrinogen, thrombin, enzymes and proteins to tweak the texture and consistency of the fresh crab meat so it can be formulated into products such as medallions, nuggets or patties.

Dough comes from a long line of Outer Bankers that dates back to the 1700s. He grew up on Roanoke Island and jokes that he first became immersed in the crab industry when he was only 3 years old—his father accidentally dropped him into his uncle's crab shedding tank, used by crabbers for holding "soft crabs" before they molt.

"Seafood was always important to our culture," he said. "I had a close friend whose father was a commercial fisherman who also ran my uncle's fish business in Wanchese. From about the ages of 9 thru 12 my friend and I spent many summer hours playing and working around the fish house. Dare County is full of many small businesses, and I think breeds an entrepreneurial culture."

"My undergrad degree was in geology," he added, "and I'm very interested in natural resources. We have so much dependence on raw materials from the earth and oceans. So much of our future will depend on more efficient use of natural resources like this. So seafood was a natural area for me. I consider our responsibility for seafood to be an extension of that interest in using natural resources more efficiently and effectively."

His new company is being built on that premise. One part of the efficiency, Dough said, is that his firm has developed a mechanical separation process for extracting crabmeat from the shell, producing a substantial increase in yield of the sweet, flavorful delicacy.

Dough said part of the reason is that Shure Foods' process doesn't cook the moisture out of the meat. Also, because their mechanical meat-removal process replaces tedious and expensive traditional methods, Shure can better use the smaller "picking" crabs that typically produce the lowest yields.

"Our process yields a higher percentage of meat per pound of raw material," Dough said. "This opens new doors to the marketplace — and it lets us bring the price down. Our goal is to open new uses for crab, not to replace other crabmeat. We're cheaper than current crab products, but still relatively expensive because it's still crab. But our product will include mostly North American blue crab, local crab that'll be priced competitively with foreign imported crab, which should also help our crabbing industry."

The Chesapeake Bay area is still the nation's largest producer of blue crabs, Dough said, but crab populations in some areas of Virginia and Maryland have dwindled because of problems with pollution and human encroachment as development fills in wetlands.
“North Carolina is right there with Louisiana as one of the other top states producing blue crabs, though,” he said. “And ours is a fairly sustainable crab resource.”

Shure Foods hopes to play a role in the sustainability of the region's crab population by using more of the meat from each crab caught.

“Crab catches come in waves,” Dough said. “There are times when the current market can't handle the volume. Other times they can't get enough. It causes violent price action while crabbers, trying to make a living, have to dump product onto the market. Remember, crabs are a perishable item. The end result is that the crabber loses money and the resource becomes misallocated.”

The fact that crabmeat deteriorates rapidly is another problem Dough is turning into an opportunity. It's why crabs are either caught and transported live, or, more commonly, cooked soon after they're caught. That deters spoilage and the cooked meat is then usually pasteurized for shipment and storage.

Dough has developed a process to treat fresh crabmeat with a protein-binding agent that allows it to be quickly shaped, portioned and frozen so it can be shipped uncooked to restaurants anywhere. It can be safely stored while frozen, but when thawed, chefs can prepare it as fresh crabmeat.

“It's portionable,” he said, meaning it can be formed into different shapes and sizes. “It can actually take on characteristics of some varieties of fish, such as trout. So we can even use it in applications that we might not otherwise be able to use crab in.”

The Biotechnology Center is a private, non-profit corporation supported by the N.C. General Assembly. Its mission is to provide long-term economic and societal benefits to North Carolina by supporting biotechnology research, business, education and strategic policy statewide. Dough linked up with the Biotechnology Center through ECU's Entrepreneurial Initiative.

Dough said his low-interest loan allows him to produce larger batches of samples than in past. “It'll help us get a better feel for full-scale production, help us get customers and also let us develop marketing materials — brochures with photos, recipes for using the product, a basic Web site, things like that.”

**College of Business receives top marks**

The Princeton Review has again given the College of Business at East Carolina University top marks, ranking it among the best U.S. business schools for the third year in a row. The New York-based education services company features ECU in its recently released 2010 edition of "The Best 301 Business Schools."

As part of its rating in the new guide, the College of Business is outlined in a two-page profile highlighting academics, career and placement, student life, and admissions information. The profile also touts the College's solid preparation in teamwork, communication/interpersonal skills, quantitative skills, and computer skills. Direct quotes from business students applaud the school's "cutting-edge" and "very demanding" classes, as well as faculty and administrators who are "very accessible and willing to lend a helping hand."

Dr. Frederick Niswander, dean of the College of Business, said, "We're thrilled to be nationally recognized again as an outstanding business school. Our longstanding AACSB accreditation — coupled with high quality faculty, high-touch instruction, and flexibility — offers students a tremendous value. ECU is truly one of the best institutions for business education."

There are approximately 2,500 business schools in the U.S.

**Upcoming Events:**

Oct. 19 — Poetry reading by Rhett Iseman Trull, 8 p.m., Bate Room 1031. Trull was the winner of the 2008 Anhinga Prize for her first collection of poetry, "The Real Warnings." Free.

Through Nov. 11 — The Second Annual Joyner Library Graduate Student Art & Design Exhibition continues until Nov. 11 on the second floor of Joyner Library. Free.

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

Dr. Susan Maxwell Bane recently addressed the Barton College community at its 108th opening convocation.

Bane practices obstetrics and gynecology at Greenville Obstetrics and Gynecology, a division of Physicians East.

In addressing the audience of students, faculty and staff, Bane shared personal stories of those on Barton’s campus in Wilson who inspired her future and influenced her life. She emphasized the importance of doing everything in life for the right reason, doing small things in a great way to make a difference (in one’s life and in the life of others), and sticking with it even when the going gets tough (whether “it” is a project, a personal or professional goal or a college major). Bane reminded students not to allow fear to paralyze them from achieving their goals and dreams. She also encouraged students to seek out those who are mentors and role models, whether they are family members and/or professors, and not to be afraid to ask for assistance. She reminded them to believe in themselves.

In addition to her medical practice, Bane serves as a clinical professor at the Brody School of Medicine, where she teaches medical students and undergraduate students. She also serves as an adjunct professor in the Department of Exercise and Sports Science at East Carolina University.

A native of Currituck County, Bane graduated in 1987 from Barton College (then Atlantic Christian College) with a bachelor of science degree in chemistry. She completed a master of science degree and a Ph.D. in kinesiology from the University of Illinois in 1989 and 1995, respectively.

Bane earned her medical degree from the University of Illinois in 1997 and completed her residency in obstetrics and gynecology at the Brody School of Medicine at ECU in 2001.

Bane is the daughter of Mary Ellen Maxwell of Moyock and the late Robert Maxwell. She and her husband, Art, also a 1987 Barton alumnus, live in Greenville with their two sons: Archer, 17, and Maxwell, 6, and their daughter, Riley, 13.
Painting mentor honored

Longtime East Carolina University art professor and painter Paul Hartley—who has influenced untold numbers of North Carolina artists—is being honored by an exhibition of more than 55 works at Lee Hansley Gallery in Raleigh. The paintings cover 20 years of the Greenville painter’s works. Hansley has extended the show through Oct. 21. Hansley says the exhibition is especially significant because Hartley, who retired last year, is seriously ill. Details: www.leehansleygallery.com.

ECU art professor and painter Paul Hartley’s ‘A Drowning Man’ is acrylic and oil on canvas.

reading out loud

Conquering the Sky Larry E. Tise
ECU historian reveals unexplored details of the Wright brothers’ flights at Kitty Hawk. 7:30 p.m. Friday, Quail Ridge Books & Music in Raleigh.
Millions in stimulus money goes to N.C. colleges

Barry Smith / Freedom Raleigh Bureau
2009-10-11 18:28:42

RALEIGH — More than $449 million from the federal stimulus bill is on its way to public higher education in North Carolina, with most of the dollars going to plug state budget holes and offset state budget cuts.

The University of North Carolina system is getting $282 million over the next two years to keep its budget in the black. An additional $112 million is primarily targeted for research, with more research grants expected to be awarded in coming months.

Millions of dollars are flowing into the N.C. Community College System also, however their numbers are considerably smaller that the UNC system’s. The system used $42 million during the previous fiscal year, which ended June 30, to offset a recession-induced revenue shortfall. Another $13.5 million is earmarked for community college programs geared toward retraining displaced workers.

Kimrey Rinehardt, vice president for federal relations for the UNC system, said that the research dollars flowing into the system will help save jobs.

"In terms of the research being stimulus, it does keep researchers in jobs," Rinehardt said. It also prompts researchers to buy lab equipment, helping out that sector of the economy, she said.

More than half of the research-oriented money going to the UNC system thus far from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) is headed toward the Chapel Hill campus which, so far, has been awarded $59.9 million.

Rinehardt said the UNC-Chapel Hill awards are a result of the university’s continued work with the National Institutes of Health. Much of it is going to cancer research, but other research is also being done, she said.

The second-highest recipient is N.C. State University with $21 million, much for energy research. N.C. State stands to gain additional research stimulus dollars in the future, she said.

"Most of the National Science Foundation hasn’t even been released yet, which is where N.C. State and (N.C.) A&T are going to do well," Rinehardt said.

UNC-Wilmington has pulled in $15.8 million in stimulus dollars thus far.

"They got some construction money to build their marine sciences building," Rinehardt said. Plans for the building have been in the works for years but the money never materialized until now, she said.

UNC Charlotte was awarded $5.7 million and East Carolina University was awarded $3.9 million, including money for breast and prostate cancer research programs along with
cardiovascular programs.

Jennifer Haygood, the chief financial officer for the state’s community college system, said the $42.2 million in stimulus stabilization funds helped support about 8,000 full-time positions last spring, when state revenue collections fell well below projections. The positions ranged from faculty members to human resources to registrars and counselors.

"That’s our largest piece of ARRA money that we have received to date," Haygood said.

The $13.5 million going to many community colleges is earmarked for "Jobs Now" programs, designed to give displaced workers skills for new jobs within six months.

"Colleges really were able to begin expending money as of July 1," Haygood said. The money going to the colleges was doled out based on the area’s number of unemployed workers and the unemployment rate.

**The Stimulus and Higher-Ed**

*While the UNC system will be using $282 million in money from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to make up for state budget cuts, various campuses are also eligible to apply for grants for additional projects. Here is the tally to date at the various UNC campuses:*

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<thead>
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<th>UNC Campus</th>
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Source: UNC General Administration
Monday, October 12, 2009

The swelling cost of North Carolina's State Employees Health plan must be brought under control. But testing workers for tobacco use and charging more for those whose body fat index doesn't measure up is among the least palatable ways to go about it and demonstrates a lack of effort.

Despite minimal support in Congress for so-called "fat tax" measures aimed at reining in health care costs, state governments are increasingly moving in that direction. State officials in Raleigh announced last week that North Carolina is to become the second state to implement extra health insurance fees for obese employees and those who smoke.

Tobacco use, poor nutrition and inactivity are the leading causes of preventable deaths in North Carolina, says Anne Rogers, director of integrated health management for the State Employees Health Plan.

"We're trying to encourage individuals to adopt healthy lifestyles," she said.

Most people are not encouraged, however, by the thought of government seeking to control personal lifestyle decisions by dipping further into individual paychecks.

Government, in this instance, is acting from an employer perspective. But as a mammoth employer in North Carolina — its health plan covers 600,000 workers, retirees and teachers — the state's actions can set the tone for other employers struggling with rising health insurance costs. In that sense, every employer-covered worker in the state has a stake in how this decision plays out.

As with all issues within the health care debate, there are compelling arguments on both sides of this one. Some insist it is completely fair to require those who pursue unhealthy lifestyle habits to pay more for health insurance. But there are better methods for encouraging healthier lifestyles than attaching punitive measures to specific behaviors.

By that measure, there are any number of bad habits with potential for taxation and government exploitation.

A better approach would be along the lines of consumer-directed health strategies like those employed for Medicaid recipients in some states. Those programs provide financial incentives for recipients who engage in wellness programs and healthy behaviors.

While those consumer-directed strategies may not provide immediate short-term gain, they are ultimately more positive and empowering for individuals than pricing policies that rush down the slippery slope toward a nanny state.
Ill considered

North Carolina's State Employees Health Plan, which veered off track financially earlier this year and needed a taxpayer bailout, now threatens to create a train wreck for its policyholders. Its intention to penalize those who smoke or are obese amounts to an inappropriate, overreaching intrusion into their lives.

As a news story last week reported, "North Carolina is poised to become only the second state to impose a fat fee on its state employees by placing them in a more expensive health insurance plan if they're obese. Smokers will feel the drag of higher costs, too ...."

Ideologues are welcome to debate whether a "fat fee" amounts to a "fat tax." The more essential point is that the health plan, which insures state government employees and their families, is going out on a limb. Instead of dealing with two notable health risks -- serious overweight and smoking -- by offering incentives for individual improvement (as many insurance plans do), it will impose penalties in the form of higher premiums.

The difference is crucial, because the latter approach requires that the plan actively identify smokers and fat folks, rather than encouraging nonsmokers and leaner people to step forward to claim discounts. There will be a chemical test, perhaps in workplaces, to root out smokers. As for obesity, the plan may monitor its insured by calculating individual body mass indexes, known to be an imperfect measure.

Even intrusive testing, however, isn't the most misguided aspect of all this.

Clearly, smoking and obesity are well-known health risks. But there are many others. A nonsmoker may not buckle his seat belt. Heavy drinking is an obstacle to a long, healthy life. Genetic conditions threaten many of us. Yet none of those risk-factors factor into the current equation.

Obesity is a particularly problematic condition to target in this way. Surely there's an inherited proclivity for some people to become overweight. And surely socioeconomic factors are at work; low-income people's diets often are less healthful than those of folks who shop at Whole Paycheck. Making poorer, fatter people pay what amounts to a penalty rate is cruelly unfair.

The State Health Plan understandably seeks, and needs, to manage its expenses. And encouraging people to quit smoking and lose weight is laudable. But the penalty route is not the way to go. The legislature, whose uneven oversight of the Health Plan is at the heart of many of its problems, should put the insurance plan back on the rails, remembering that the core principle of a group health plan is that the insured are all in it together.
Cocaine case is the buzz of UNC

CHAPEL HILL -- In a college town where booze is king and pot is popular, the recent arrests of seven current or former UNC-Chapel Hill students on cocaine charges created a stir.

The charges were unusual -- particularly because two people were charged with felony drug trafficking. But experts say all this is not likely an indicator of a surge in cocaine's popularity.

"I haven't noticed a huge problem with it," said Scott Gallisdorfer, who, as the university's undergraduate student attorney general, evaluates students charged with crimes to decide which will face the student honor court. "We don't get a ton of cocaine cases. The vast majority are marijuana."

During the past four years, the number of students facing honor court charges for alcohol violations has outpaced all drug charges, according to the most recent honor court data available.

And a 2008 survey of UNC-CH students revealed a wide disparity in the use of these vices: 69 percent of respondents said they'd consumed alcohol in the last 30 days, about 20 percent had used marijuana in that period and just 2.5 percent had used cocaine.

Still, the cocaine busts last month at a local apartment have been a hot topic among students and parents. Several students arrested were in fraternities or sororities, including two women who lived in the Chi Omega house -- a detail the student newspaper The Daily Tar Heel pointed out repeatedly in its reporting.

That led to debate about drug use and the Greek system.

"It's not confined to the Greek community," said Winston Crisp, assistant vice chancellor for student affairs. "I don't think the Greek community gets excused, but more generally, drugs and alcohol are problems that go throughout the student body."

Crisp issued a stern warning to Greek organizations recently, saying the university would no longer tolerate drug and alcohol abuse and the destructive behavior it spawns.

UNC-CH officials have not created new drug policies or regulations, but they say the recent busts have provided an opportunity for introspection.

"We continue to look into what the culture is on our campus," said Bob Winston, chairman of UNC-CH's Board of Trustees. "We don't think we have a pervasive drug issue."

On Sept. 15, Chapel Hill police raided a Church Street apartment and confiscated 75.6 grams of cocaine broken into one-gram packets, a clear indication of intent to sell, police said.

In the raid, Jonathan Ray Plymale, 22, and Eliza McQuail Vaughan, 21, were charged with trafficking, cocaine possession and intent to distribute the drug. Police subsequently found an additional 121 grams of cocaine when they searched Plymale's home at 107 Fraternity Court. The street value of all the
cocaine is about $7,500, police said.

Vaughan is a UNC-CH student; Plymale was enrolled until spring 2009.

"It's not normal for us to catch students with trafficking amounts," said Sgt. Jabe Hunter, head of Chapel Hill Police Department's narcotics division. "That's definitely unusual."

While other drugs are more popular, cocaine has been a consistent presence on this and other college campuses for decades, experts say. But it has a stigma that others do not and thus is generally consumed out of public view, students and health experts say.

"It's such an undercover thing," said Jasmin Jones, UNC-CH's student body president. "It's condemned so much and there are such repercussions, people know to hide it."

The university's honor court takes it seriously. Consider: A student's first sanction for marijuana possession is a semester of probation; for cocaine possession, a semester suspension. If you're caught dealing cocaine, you get expelled.

Second shock

The September arrests were another blow to the Greek system, already shaken by the recent death of fraternity president Courtland Smith.

Smith, president of the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity, was shot dead by Archdale police last month after a bizarre evening that began at a fraternity party and ended after Smith, while driving on I-85, told a 911 operator he was drinking, had a gun and was trying to kill himself.

The fraternity was subsequently sanctioned by a Greek judicial board for serving alcohol at events, including the party the night before Smith died. The fraternity was put on social probation for a year and prohibited from hosting parties; it is now under review and could lose its official recognition by the university.

Wes Minton, a Raleigh real estate broker, said this fall's events have forced parents to acknowledge that there are substance-abuse problems on college campuses. Minton, a 1978 UNC-CH graduate, has two children at UNC-CH. He's had the drugs-and-alcohol talk with them plenty of times, starting when they were 11 or 12, Minton said.

He hopes it sank in.

"I'm doing the best I can with a very difficult culture out there," Minton said recently.

"It's not just in Chapel Hill, and it's not just a Greek [system] problem. It's campus-wide and all over this country. It's scary."

eric.ferreri@newsobserver.com or 919-932-2008.
CONCORD, N.H. — A federal law inspired by a New Hampshire woman’s courage and enacted through her mother’s determination took effect Friday, sparing seriously ill or injured college students from having to choose between taking time off and keeping their health insurance.

"Michelle’s Law" allows college students to take up to a year off school for medical reasons and remain on their family’s health insurance plan. It is named for Michelle Morse, who died of colon cancer at age 22 in 2005, six months after graduating from Plymouth State University.

Against her doctor’s advice, the aspiring teacher maintained a full course load while undergoing chemotherapy because she otherwise would have been dropped from her parents’ health insurance plan.

After her daughter’s death, AnnMarie Morse made it her life’s mission to ensure other families would not face the same choice. When someone from the state insurance department told her, "If you don’t like the law, change it," that’s exactly what she did.

The New Hampshire Legislature enacted its version of Michelle’s Law in 2006. Morse then turned her focus to Congress, which passed the federal version last year.

"It’s a very bittersweet day," Morse said at a news conference Friday, her voice trembling. "I wish I could turn back time and have the family my husband and I were given: one daughter, one son."

But she said she will continue to fight for health care reform. She was in Washington just a few weeks ago, telling members of Congress to "put patients before politics."

"Michelle’s legacy will live on," she said.

Morse was joined by Rep. Paul Hodes, D-N.H., who sponsored the House version of the bill. Sen. Judd Gregg and former Sen. John Sununu, both R-N.H., led the efforts in the Senate.

Hodes estimated that the law could apply to thousands of college students nationwide.

"The message of Michelle’s Law is that change is hard, but change is possible," he said. "Health care reform is more than words, it affects people."

In a journal the Morse family shared with The Associated Press in 2006, Michelle Morse described her longing to have a family of her own, celebrate many Christmases and outlive her parents.

"I’m scared for my mom and dad," she wrote in December 2003, just after she was diagnosed. "I want to make this easier on them."

Sara Jayne Steen, president of Plymouth State University, said no one can spare families the pain of losing a child, but Michelle’s Law will at least eliminate the tough choice between treatment and education.

"Can one person make a difference? The answer, profoundly and in front of us, is yes," she said.
'Crazy Katie' has a mission in her madness

CHAPEL HILL -- On the average day, Katie Vogel might blow up a fake volcano, build a bear track out of goo, cut up an owl pellet and sink a fleet of aluminum foil boats.

Oh, and then there are the barf buckets.

"I'm 'Crazy Katie, the science lady,'" says Vogel, 28.

But Vogel teaches some pretty serious lessons at the helm of Healing and Hope Through Science, a program that provides hands-on science classes to sick children in UNC and Duke hospitals.

In the confines of the hospital sick wards and playrooms, Vogel and her students build model volcanoes that bubble and spew a special blend of homemade lava. They load up small foil boats to see how much weight they can hold before plummeting to the depths of water-filled "barf buckets." They create replicas of all kinds of animal tracks and place them around fake campfires. They make fake snow, fashion botanically correct tissue-paper flowers, use computer programs to dissect virtual frogs, author nature newsletters and study leaves, sea shells and more of nature's offerings.

Patients and parents await her visits.

"She's fabulous," says Flicka Bateman, principal of the UNC Hospitals School. "It's such a wonderful program for hospitalized kids. It's hands-on. It's fun. It's academically challenging. ... It brings the real world to these children, that's for darn sure."

An outdoor girl

Vogel grew up in Atlanta in a neighborhood with large trees and big backyards. The youngsters built forts, played outside and enjoyed all that urban nature had to offer.

In third grade at a school she still raves about, Vogel fondly recalls studying natural disasters and not only doing a classroom project on Mount Saint Helens but also actually visiting the active volcano in Washington state that erupted in 1980 and killed 57 people.

"I've always loved being outside and natural science," Vogel says.

When she was 12, Vogel spent a transformative three weeks in the North Carolina mountains at Green River Preserve camp. The campers collected bugs from cool mountain streams to study the health of the water. They learned about trees, rocks and the environment. Almost magically, her outdoor world was expanded.

"I felt like, 'OK, I'm home,'" Vogel says.

Still, for years, she planned to be a doctor, which would have meant long hours indoors. When she realized doctors can't heal everyone, she changed course. She transferred from Wesleyan University in
Connecticut to Davidson College, a move that brought her to North Carolina.

After getting a degree in biology, Vogel ended up at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences in an outreach program that sent her and a colleague to 10 counties. During the summers, she was a white-water canoe guide for a Davidson program.

A light bulb goes on

It was while she was based at the Raleigh museum that Vogel hit on the idea that keeps her busy these days. Although Vogel had pretty much given up on the notion of becoming a doctor, she continued to volunteer at children's hospitals. On one visit to WakeMed about five years ago, she was asked to drop in on a sick child who was not responding to visitors.

Vogel had no idea about the diagnosis or prognosis for the little girl. But she knew that kids loved the butterfly and seashell kits she had been bringing from the museum.

"I went in, and this kid was not responding to anything," Vogel recalls. "I had this box of shells with me, and I asked if I could put a shell in her hand."

The girl opened her fingers and grabbed the small piece of nature. Soon the sick child was not only responsive but also engaging others in conversation about the shell.

Vogel wanted to take science into hospitals, but she needed funding. The Oak Foundation came through with the first grant, she said. It was for $23,000.

With private donations and other grants from the Hendrick Foundation and the Optimist Club of Chapel Hill, Vogel went to Annie Nashold, director of the Sarah P. Duke Gardens' children's education program. A new occupation and avocation were born.

In 2008, Vogel's program received a $200,000 grant for three years. She draws a salary of $34,000 and spends a large chunk of the other money on microscopes, other equipment and supplies.

Five days a week, Vogel is in and out of the children's hospitals at Duke and UNC, doing what she can to take science indoors. Once a month, she has a weekend program at the Duke gardens for outpatients.

Dee Dee Gradus, the mother of a 9-year-old girl with cystic fibrosis, says Vogel has been taking her special brand of science to her daughter for five years while they're at UNC Hospitals. Student and teacher study mounted butterflies. They dig through buckets of dirt to unearth shark's teeth and other fossils.

"It's fun when she comes," says Kristi Gradus, a fourth-grader from Swansboro.

There are frustrations. Hospital rules keep her from taking the children outdoors. Some of nature's offerings are prohibited indoors, too.

To overcome those obstacles, she recently loaded a suitcase with 55 pounds of rocks and sand from the Green River and took it to an artist friend in Portland, Ore., so he could build a model of the waterway on a rolling hospital cart. She also shipped two bags of sand from the N.C. coast, 25 pounds, to the same artist so he could build a beach model for her students.
There are heartaches that come with the job. She has to deal with death more often than she would like.

On the down days, Vogel seeks solace from her partner, Will Stoudemire, a second-year medical student she met at Davidson. She gardens. She writes in a journal. She takes in the words of Mary Oliver, a poet she latched on to in college. She cooks or makes a bright orange batch of pumpkin ice cream.

If she's exhausted, she heads for the Green River. A couple of hours at her home away from home can be transformative, just as they were more than half a lifetime ago when she landed there for summer camp.

Then she goes back to the children and the program she hopes will become a national model.

"This is my calling," Vogel says. "It is so incredibly fulfilling and fun and challenging."

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