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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
Officials: Get the H1N1 flu vaccine

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, October 15, 2009

Health officials are urging citizens to get H1N1 vaccines now as they become available and to wait for the seasonal flu vaccine.

Dr. John Morrow, director of the Pitt County Health Department, made the recommendation at the 2009 Pitt County Flu Summit at the County Office Building Thursday evening.

Morrow said officials are not seeing cases of seasonal flu right now, and it usually doesn’t appear each year until late November or early December. He strongly recommended getting the H1N1 vaccine, especially for pregnant women and small children.

“I will take it myself and I will give it to my children,” Morrow said. “That is the best advice I have.”

The county will make H1N1 vaccines available for free today from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Agriculture Extension Office on Old Creek Road. Morrow said the county has 600 doses of injectable vaccine and about 500 doses of flu mist vaccine.

“We will likely run out of vaccines but more than enough will be coming,” Morrow said.

The mist vaccine can be taken by anyone between the ages of 2-49. The injectable vaccine can be taken by anyone over 6 months old.

The seasonal flu vaccine is running low for some counties because the manufacturers of vaccines have shifted their attention to H1N1 vaccines, Morrow said. The seasonal flu vaccine should be the second priority for citizens right now, he said.

“Unfortunately, nobody can predict the flu season,” Morrow said. “We hope that this will be a relatively mild season. We are not seeing a whole lot of deaths, but we have seen some.”

There have been four deaths and 570 hospitalizations since Oct. 7 in North Carolina.

Officials at East Carolina University, Pitt County Memorial Hospital and Pitt County Schools were on hand at the summit to describe the steps they have taken to battle the spread of the H1N1 virus.

Pitt County Schools Superintendent Beverly Reep said the school year started with a letter to parents about H1N1 flu. Schools are putting up posters on the proper way to cough without spreading germs and posters in bathrooms that remind children to wash their hands for the amount of time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday.”

Reep said that schools have seen an 8 percent increase in absences for this week compared to the same week last year, though some of those may not be attributed to H1N1 viruses.

School officials are asking parents to keep their children at home until they have gone 24 hours without a fever without taking a fever-reducing medication.

“If your child has a fever, we will send them home,” Reep said. “This is a double-edged sword for schools because we do have an attendance problem. But we have to protect the children in the schools.”

Reep said that if 10 percent of the population in a classroom or school gets sick then parents will be contacted by
officials to alert them of the outbreak.

Bill Koch, ECU associate vice chancellor for environmental health and safety, said ECU is taking similar steps to educate students.

"For the ECU community the best way to get information is from our Web site," Koch said.

There is a link for H1N1 information from the ECU home page at www.ecu.edu

ECU students have been able to get seasonal flu vaccines over the past few weeks and officials are planning to make H1N1 vaccines available as soon as possible, Koch said.

Dr. Keith Ramsey, medical director of infection control at PCMH, said the hospital will open a flu clinic in Doctor's Park that will be open for patients with flu-like symptoms 5-9 p.m. Monday-Friday and 1-4 p.m. on the weekends to keep the emergency room clear for other patients during hours when primary doctors' offices are usually closed.

"We are very concerned about the impact on the emergency department," Ramsey said. "We have seen a lot of cases among the pediatric population."

Morrow said that most people should not visit the doctor unless they are having trouble breathing. They should stay home and take treatments for fever, he said.

Morrow said getting the vaccine is very important and it doesn't present the risks that some people think.

"Will some people be injured from the vaccine? Yes," he said. "But you have to weigh the risk of taking the vaccine against not taking the vaccine. About 36,000 Americans die each year from flu; we do not have people dying from the vaccine."

Morrow said the H1N1 vaccine is made the same way as the seasonal flu vaccine and it has gone through the same FDA checks.

"Don't be a hero, go get your H1N1 vaccine," Ramsey said in his closing remarks at the summit.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9565.

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City OKS outdoor airing of ECU football game

Waterfront setting planned for showing of November contest

By MIKE VOSS
Contributing Editor
Published: Thursday, October 15, 2009 2:20 AM EDT

Want to watch the ECU-Tulsa football game Nov. 15 on a big screen, a really big screen?

If so, show up at the Washington waterfront that Sunday to watch the gridiron match-up on a 20-foot-by-20-foot screen that will be set up outside. Plans call for the screen to be installed on the fence behind the former Maola plant on Water Street, according to Hodges.

"It's free. We are just doing it for fun," Hodges said.

Washington's City Council, during its meeting Monday, gave its unanimous approval for the big-screen showing to take place. The event is co-sponsored by the Beaufort County Pirates Club and the Washington Daily News. ESPN will carry the game, with the game slated to start at 8:15 p.m.

"All the players are like 8-foot tall and running around," said Mac "Bear" Hodges, an East Carolina University alumni, as he lobbied the council for its approval.

Hodges said event organizers are trying to arrange for the ECU band to perform at the event. If that happens, the event will begin about 6:30 p.m. or 7 p.m., Hodges said.

The Beaufort County Pirate Club has about 300 members, Hodges said, with up to 200 of them possibly attending the event.

Hodges said event organizers will not be selling alcoholic beverages as part of the event, but attendees will be able to bring coolers, which may or may not contain alcoholic beverages, to the broadcast. The Pirates Pub & Grill has on-site and off-site permits for alcoholic beverages, Hodges noted.

Attendees may buy food and beverages from Pirates Pub & Grill, located at Harding Square at the south end of Market Street, Hodges said.

In other business, the council heard a report from Phil Mobley, director of the Parks and Recreation Department, concerning the walkway the will pass under the new bridge being built over Runyon Creek at Havens Gardens. Mobley said the concrete pilings for the section of the walkway under the bridge have been put in place.

While the segment of the walkway directly under the new bridge will be concrete, the northern and southern ends of the walkway will be timber.

The concrete decking will be a little lower than the timber segments.

The city is looking at installing "hog-slat" concrete decking under the new bridge, Mobley said in August.

"We've got to make sure its handicapped-accessible," he said then.
Plans call for the walkway to be built over Runyon Creek, with the walkway connecting to land on the west bank of the creek. The walkway, estimated to be about 300 feet long, would form something like this bracket: ].

The walkway, which will have observations areas, would connect parts of Havens Garden that are separated by the highway, allowing pedestrians to move between those areas without crossing the highway. The walkway also would connect boat ramps north of the highway to sections of Havens Garden south of the highway.

The walkway is part of an overall plan to improve and reconfigure Havens Garden after the new bridge is built. Those proposed improvements include upgrading the boat ramp and a parking area north of the existing highway.
Davis to discuss jobs, education, senior issues at meeting

The Daily Reflector

Thursday, October 15, 2009

Pitt County's freshman state senator has scheduled a Monday night meeting in Farmville to discuss education, job creation and senior citizen protection during the ongoing state budget crisis.

State Sen. Don Davis, D-Pitt, has scheduled the meeting for 6:30-7:30 p.m. in the Farmville Town Hall, 3672 N. Main St.

"The plan for Monday night is to give a summary, an overview of the session with some highlights as they pertain to Pitt County and share where we are right now in terms of our economic forecast," said Davis, who was elected in 2008 to represent Senate District 5, consisting of Greene and parts of Pitt and Wayne counties.

"These events have given me a great opportunity to hear what is really on people's minds and let me know what priorities we need to address in the next legislative session," he said.

The General Assembly adjourned its 2009 session in early August after passing a budget that included a nearly 10 percent spending cut, the largest cut in the state's history, Davis said. Despite the cut, Davis said the budget protected education and health care for children.

Davis said he also was proud to work with Pitt County senior delegates to secure re-occurring funding for indigent medical care at the Brody School of Medicine's family medical practice and additional money for the creation of East Carolina University's School of Dentistry.

"On reflection there were very challenging times for us but in the midst of challenging times I think there lies opportunities," he said.

The Legislature will return in May to conduct a short session to approve a budget for fiscal year 2010-11.

Davis serves as vice chairman of the Senate Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Committee and on the Senate Education, Health Care, Transportation and State and Local Government committees.
Feminist icon Steinem to speak at ECU

By
Her

Thursday, October 15, 2009

American feminist icon Gloria Steinem, will speak at 7 p.m. Nov. 6 in East Carolina University's Wright Auditorium as part of the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series. Steinem will present the series' Premier Lecture "Reflections on Feminism: A Voyage of Discovery with Gloria Steinem."

A journalist and social activist, Steinem emerged as an important intellectual force and a prominent leader of the feminist movement in 1963 with an investigative report on how the women of Playboy were treated. She co-founded New York magazine in the 1960s and later served as founding editor and publisher of Ms. magazine.

Her ideas have been published in many magazines and newspapers in the United States and abroad, and she is a frequent guest commentator on radio and television. Steinem has been the subject of Lifetime and ABC biographical television documentaries, and in 1993, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Co-sponsored by the ECU Women's Studies Program, this event is open to the public.

Want to hear Her

- What: "Reflections on Feminism: A Voyage of Discovery with Gloria Steinem"
- When: 7 p.m. Nov. 6
- Where: ECU's Wright Auditorium
- Tickets: $10 for the general public; complimentary tickets are available to ECU students, faculty and staff
- Call: ECU Central Ticket Office at (252) 328-4788 or (252) 328-4736
- Established in 2007, the Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series advances the spirit of exploration and discovery that is the hallmark of the liberal arts. Each year, the series offers a schedule of prominent speakers whose pioneering work continues to shape our world.

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Pirates give back, get star treatment

By Tony Castleberry
The Daily Reflector

Thursday, October 15, 2009

WINTERVILLE — The tall kids and the short kids all had a blast at the Boys and Girls Club on Thursday.

During its annual visit to the recreation center on Firetower Road, the East Carolina men’s basketball team seemed to be having as much fun as the kids they were entertaining. The players also got some star treatment as they were besieged by groups of youngsters for autographs in between games of pool, basketball and otherwise just hanging out and talking.

Visits like Thursday’s have become common during Mack McCarthy’s tenure and ECU’s third-year head coach says he’s happy with the way his players have embraced community service.

“The kids have always been really great and appreciative of our efforts to come out here,” said McCarthy, whose team will hold a two-hour workout today before the first official practice of the season Saturday at noon. “I’d like to think that the community is recognizing that we’re involved, that we are trying to give back. We can’t ever repay them for all the support they’ve given us, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t try.”

Pirate sophomore guard Chris Turner is likely one of many Pirates who spent time in their hometown Boys and Girls Clubs during their formative years. The lessons learned there — on basketball courts and off — can help shape the direction many young boys and girls take as they get older.

The lesson certainly isn’t lost on Turner.

“I kind of grew up in the Boys and Girls Club,” the Durham native said. “This is sort of a homecoming for me really.

“They show us so much support that I feel like we should get out here and spend time with people in the community every chance we get. When we’re not in the gym working or in school, it’s good to give some of our time to the kids. They enjoy it and we enjoy it too.”

Even though the start of practice is right around the corner and the season opener is less than a month away, McCarthy said he’s happy his team can have its attention diverted away from basketball to worthy causes. The coach said giving back to the community is something all of ECU’s students, not just his basketball Pirates, can benefit from.

“I’m not sure community service is not one of the most important things that gets taught in college, not just on college athletic teams,” McCarthy said. “When you’re in college, you need to be exposed to community service and those efforts. The service organizations, whether they be fraternities or clubs or sororities, I think those things provide wonderful life lessons.”

East Carolina, which finished 13-17 last season and has increased its win total in each of McCarthy’s three seasons in charge, begins the season Nov. 13 against Virginia-Wise.

Contact Tony Castleberry at tcastleberry@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9591.
East Carolina University homecoming

The Daily Reflector

Friday, October 16, 2009

East Carolina University's homecoming weekend actually kicked off Thursday night with a concert by Dashboard Confessional and Valencia.

The festivities will continue today through Saturday with plenty of opportunities to show your Pirate pride.

The ECU Alumni Association will host "10 Years After the Flood: A Reflective Conversation" at 10 a.m. today in Hendrix Theatre on the school's campus. Former Chancellor Richard Eakin will lead the event.

Others participating will include meteorologist Marvin Daugherty, former gridiron Pirate Kevin Monroe, former ECU Vice Chancellor for Student Life and 2009 Outstanding Alumni Award recipient Garrie Moore and current ECU Dean of Students Lynn Roeder, who was director of ECU's Counseling and Student Development during that time.

Call 328-6072 to register for the event.

Uptown Greenville will hold a special homecoming Freeboot Friday, a live-after-five social event with live music and entertainment, from 5-8 p.m. today at Five Points Plaza, corner of Fifth and Evans streets.

The ECU Dance Team and Cheerleaders will make an appearance at 6:10 p.m. followed by Head Football Coach Skip Holtz, who will speak at 6:30 p.m.

The Shadow Players Stage Combat Group of Raleigh will perform in promotion of the 2010 PirateFest scheduled for April 9-10.

As always, Freeboot will include live music with headliner Jupiter Jones taking the stage at 6:40 p.m. The four-man, one-woman band formed and played its first show in August 2008 at Tie Breakers.

Performing a mix of '80s and '90s classics, the band features fiddle and both male and female vocals. The band was named 2008 Best Local Band by mixer magazine's readers.

They have performed at clubs, festivals, weddings and birthday parties. Their music ranges from country and rock to dance.

Barefoot Wade will open Freeboot at 5 p.m.

Wade McVey — aka Barefoot Wade — combines elements of country, rock, reggae, funk, comedy and blues in his original and cover songs. On stage, Wade plays a variety of instruments including acoustic and electric guitars, bass guitar, steel drums, keyboards and a kazoo. He regularly travels from Virginia to Key West, Fla., to perform.

Saturday morning, an alumni breakfast will be held at 9 a.m. at the Taylor-Slaughter Alumni Center, 901 E. Fifth St., which will then be followed by the 2009 Homecoming Parade at 10 a.m. The Marching Pirates band will perform and floats decorated with this year's theme "100 Years of Treasured Traditions" will travel down Fifth Street.

For those who have tickets, an alumni tailgate will begin at 1 p.m. with live music by Victor Hudson and the menu catered by Aramark.
The finale for the homecoming weekend will be when the ECU Football team plays Rice in a home game matchup at 3 p.m. at Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium.
Author to discuss new book about Wright brothers

MANTEO, N.C. -- A new book chronicles the futile efforts of the Wright brothers to conduct their flights on the Outer Banks in secret in 1908, five years after they first took to the sky.

Author Larry Tise has written the book titled "Conquering the Sky: The Secret Flights of the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk." He will discuss his book Wednesday evening at the Outer Banks History Center in Manteo.

Tise is a historian and author who lives and works in Philadelphia and in North Carolina. He served as consulting historian for the North Carolina First Flight Centennial Commission. He also was appointed Wilbur and Orville Wright Distinguished Professor of History at East Carolina University in Greenville.
Police thought student had a gun

CHAPEL HILL -- The UNC-Chapel Hill fraternity president shot to death by an Archdale police officer this summer reached for his pocket, leading the officer to think he was going for a gun, according to an autopsy report released Thursday.

The report says Courtland Benjamin Smith, 21, had told friends in Chapel Hill that he was thinking about suicide sometime before he climbed into his Toyota SUV early on Aug. 23 and headed west.

Smith, a junior biology major from Houston, called 911 as he drove through Guilford County on Interstate 40 and requested help, saying he was armed with a handgun and considering suicide. The dispatcher kept Smith talking, trying to get him to describe where he was.

Two Archdale police cars intercepted Smith's truck about 5 a.m. not long after it crossed into Randolph County on Interstate 85 traveling an estimated 85 mph. Smith pulled off the highway.

Until the autopsy report was made public Thursday, authorities have said little about what happened next.

"He got out of the car and made a suggestive move toward his pocket which the police interpreted as a move to get a gun," according to the report from the state medical examiner's office. "They then fired on him and he was hit in the abd/cheat and dropped down."

The autopsy found Smith died of four wounds from a .357-caliber weapon. A sketch shows that one bullet hit the center of his torso.

The report concluded that Smith was intoxicated; the alcohol content of his blood was 0.22 percent. Toxicology tests were performed only for alcohol and, at the request of the State Bureau of Investigation, a class of sedative drugs called benzodiazepines. There were no traces of that family of drugs in Smith's system; tests for other drugs were not performed.

Drinking and depression were listed as contributing factors in his death.

"Young student had commented to friends on [the day he died] and before about possible suicidal ideas," the report said.

The SBI routinely investigates police shootings. It has not completed its investigation, a spokeswoman for the agency said Thursday.

Smith was president of the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity, and his wide circle of friends, parents of his fraternity brothers and others connected with the campus have questioned why he was shot, given that investigators hadn't said he was armed. There is nothing in the report that says Smith had a gun.

An official statement released by the fraternity late Thursday night stated they were skeptical about reports that he was depressed or suicidal. "We are also unaware of any history of depression; to the
contrary, Courtland was cheerful and optimistic," the statement read.

Said he had a gun

During the 911 call, Smith told the dispatcher that he had a 9 mm handgun in his back pocket.

Guilford dispatchers relayed information about Smith to a police dispatcher in Archdale. A tape of police radio traffic in Archdale shows that officers on the scene were simply told that Smith was armed and suicidal, not that a gun might be in his back pocket.

At one point during the 911 call, an officer can be heard telling Smith to stay in his car, and Smith replies that he needs to pull something out. The recording ends before any shots can be heard.

Archdale police say they turned the shooting scene over to the SBI without searching Smith's Toyota SUV, so they are unsure whether Smith actually had a gun. However, Smith's parents -- who have been in contact with the SBI investigators -- wrote to the parent of another fraternity member last week and said they had been told there wasn't a gun.

The Archdale officer, Jeremy Paul Flinchum, has been on paid leave pending the outcome of the SBI investigation. A second officer who was on the scene but did not fire is back on duty.

Smith was at a fraternity party the night before he was killed, and friends there last saw him about 12:30 a.m. Roommates at his off-campus home said they last saw him about 2 a.m.

The police cars had dashboard video cameras, but the Randolph County district attorney's office asked a judge to seal the video from the Smith shooting to prevent the media from viewing them. The News & Observer and other media organizations asked Randolph Superior Court Judge Vance Bradford Long to release the recording because it was a public record, but Long declined, saying it wouldn't be proper while the investigation is still under way.

The video would be made public if the district attorney decides not to prosecute Flinchum or if it is presented as evidence in a trial, he said.

The video recording doesn't show the shooting but does show the interaction between Smith and police officers beforehand, according to the judge's order.

jay.price@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4526